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The Legacy of Antonio Sant'Elia: An Analysis of Sant'Elia's Posthumous Role in the Development of Italian Futurism during the Fascist Era

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THE LEGACY OF ANTONIO SANT'ELIA:
AN ANALYSIS OF SANT'ELIA'S POSTHUMOUS ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF ITALIAN FUTURISM DURING THE FASCIST ERA

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Art and Art History

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Ashley Gardini

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APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ART AND ART HISTORY

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May 2014

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ABSTRACT

THE LEGACY OF ANTONIO SANT'ELIA: AN ANALYSIS OF SANT'ELIA'S POSTHUMOUS ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITALIAN FUTURISM DURING THE FASCIST ERA

by

Ashley Gardini

This thesis is an examination of the posthumous legacy of Antonio Sant'Elia propagated by F.T. Marinetti during the 1920s and '30s in Fascist Italy. It is during the period of Second Futurism that the *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture* and the images from the *La Città Nuova* series came to define Sant'Elia's identity as the figurehead of Futurist architecture. This research contributes to the scholarly discussion of Second Futurism by giving context to specific actions taken by Marinetti during the Fascist era to control how Sant'Elia would be remembered.

This thesis analyzes the Fascist government's control over Italian society, religion, and culture to understand how art movements functioned in Fascist Italy. By using Emilio Gentile's theory of the "sacralization of politics" to explain how Fascist society functioned in Italy and to identify "fascist religion," this study explores the important role both myth and ritual played in unifying Italian society during this era. It is with this understanding that this thesis concludes by connecting Sant'Elia's posthumous legacy to the Fascist cult of the fallen.

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Introduction

The publication of the 1914 *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture* secured the status of Antonio Sant'Elia, as the *Manifesto*'s author and illustrator, within the history of modern architecture. A young Italian architect, Sant'Elia joined the Italian Futurists the same year that the *Manifesto* was published but tragically died just two short years later fighting for Italy in World War One. The following two decades saw Sant'Elia promoted as both the father of Futurist architecture and a Fascist war hero by F.T. Marinetti, the founder of the Italian Futurists. These claims by Marinetti were not entirely accurate. Sant'Elia's involvement with the Futurists was limited, and he did not create any specifically Futurist architectural works once he joined the movement. Furthermore, Sant'Elia was never a supporter of Fascism. As a Socialist party member and city council representative, there is no evidence that he disagreed with his party's stance on World War One. Alternatively, there is no evidence that Sant'Elia sympathized with the Interventionists who were pushing for Italy to enter the war. What does remain is the question as to why Marinetti chose to promote Sant'Elia in such a way that he drew a cult following among Futurists during the Fascist era. Even those not associated with Futurism came to regard Sant'Elia as a heroic figure of the Fascist revolution. This thesis seeks to give context and understanding to the legacy of Sant'Elia as the figurehead of Futurist architecture that emerged out of Fascist Italy during the 1920s and '30s. I argue that Marinetti promoted Sant'Elia as the figurehead of Futurist architecture by incorporating Sant'Elia's legacy with the cult of the fallen, a prominent Fascist myth, to create closer ties between Futurism and Mussolini's Fascist government.

This thesis is primarily based on a synthesis of secondary sources. My research integrates scholarly work on Sant'Elia with new research on Fascist culture and aesthetics. The gap in Sant'Elia scholarship that I am addressing is the lack of an understanding of the role Sant'Elia's posthumous legacy played in both Second Futurism and Fascist society.¹ The plethora of exhibits highlighting Sant'Elia's work and the number of public spaces named after him during the Fascist era in Italy indicates the prestigious status Sant'Elia held, but there is currently no definitive scholarship that currently explains why. This thesis seeks to contextualize Sant'Elia's interwar legacy by exploring Second Futurism's relationship with Mussolini and his Fascist government.

There are two scholarly books published on Antonio Sant'Elia, *Antonio Sant'Elia: The Complete Works* by Luciano Caramel and Alberto Longatti, published in 1988, and Esther da Costa Meyer's 1995 book, *Retreat into the Future: The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia*. It is made apparent by the tone of their text that Caramel and Longatti come from the lineage of Italian scholars who wish to discredit Futurism after World War

¹ Italian Futurism is typically divided into two periods divided by World War One. The majority of scholarly work on Futurism focuses on the pre-war period, from approximately 1909 to 1916. This thesis discusses Second Futurism, which occurred from 1919 to Marinetti's death in 1944. Giovanni Lista's *Futurism* has been my primary source for an overview of Second Futurism. I am using the term Second Futurism because of its historical precedents. Lista notes that the term Second Futurism evolved from an expression used by Marinetti himself. After World War One, as Marinetti used the term "the first Futurists" to designate pre-war members of the movement. In 1916, Julius Evola, an Italian philosopher and writer, began to use the term "second Futurist period" when discussing post-World War One Futurism. Scholars have also used the term neo-Futurism or simply Futurism to describe post-war Futurism. Lista's research also shows that there are significant differences between 1920s and '30s Futurism. Given the restraints of this thesis, I do not have the opportunity to adequately address the difference between these two decades, as the changes between the 1920s and the 1930s are not clearly represented in the development of Futurist architecture. I do think that this is an area of Futurism that deserves greater scholarly attention. My decision to use this term ignores what appears to be an emerging trend in Italian Futurist scholarship to view the movement as a whole, instead of designating these pre- and post-war periods of Futurism. Given the death of Sant'Elia in 1916, it is appropriate for my discussion to make this distinction.

One and return Sant'Elia to a respectable heritage. The text works hard to prove that Sant'Elia developed his architectural ideas independently from the Futurists and tries to place him within a longer lineage of other well respected, and more conservative, Italian architects of his time. The authors also continue to perpetuate the *Messaggio* vs. *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture* debate by devoting a full chapter to an analysis of these two documents. In this chapter Caramel and Longatti argue it is unlikely that Sant'Elia agreed with the changes Marinetti made to the *Messaggio* to transform it into the *Manifesto*. They also discount Italian journalist Mario Bugelli's claim that these two texts were "to be considered part and parcel of the same document."² Caramel and Longatti close the book by curtly addressing the legacy Marinetti created for Sant'Elia as Fascist propaganda. The overall tone of their text is an obvious anti-Futurist response, following in the Italian tradition of trying to separate Sant'Elia's history from that of the Italian Futurists.

In the other of the two major scholarly works on Sant'Elia, *The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia: Retreat into the Future*, da Costa Meyer gives the most comprehensive look at Sant'Elia's work and his legacy to date. She presents a thorough and well-written text that takes a neutral stance on the history of Sant'Elia. Her unbiased, fact-based approach is one that I hope to emulate in my thesis writing. Da Costa Meyer addresses the Fascist era legacy of Sant'Elia in the epilogue of her book, where she notes that by the mid-1930s "he had been endowed with heroism, vitality, and a sacrificed death, crucial

² Luciano Caramel and Alberto Longatti, *Antonio Sant'Elia: The Complete Works* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1988), 44.

prerequisites of the new role models of the regime.”³ In her discussion of Sant’Elia’s posthumous legacy, she primarily focuses on the relationship – and competition – between the Futurists and the Rationalists during the 1930s.⁴ Both the Futurists and the Rationalists claimed Sant’Elia as a father figure. This claim by the Rationalists was initially rejected by the Futurists, who argued that only they could lay claim to Sant’Elia. What da Costa Meyer leaves out of her discussion is the much wider competition amongst artists and architects under the Fascist government of which the Futurists and Rationalists were a part. Her analysis is hindered by this limitation. Furthermore, it has been recognized by multiple scholars that Futurism failed in its attempt to develop a cohesive architectural program, leaving Iain Boyd Whyte to argue in his 2000 essay, “Futurist Architecture,” that no Futurist-style of architecture ever truly existed.⁵ This eventually brought Marinetti to support Rationalist architects under the reasoning that they were contemporary Italian architects working in a style that reflected the machine age.⁶

Da Costa Meyer is the only scholar to attempt to explain why Sant’Elia’s interwar legacy grew to such popularity. Other than in this 1995 book on Sant’Elia, Sant’Elia’s

³ Esther da Costa Meyer, *The Work of Antonio Sant’Elia: Retreat into the Future* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 197.

⁴ Ibid, 194.

⁵ Iain Boyd Whyte, “The Architecture of Futurism,” in *International Futurism in Arts and Literature*, ed. Günter Berghaus (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 372. Dennis Doordan reaches the same conclusion regarding Futurism’s inability to develop a program for Futurist architecture in his book, *Building Modern Italy*.

⁶ Richard A. Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 327.

legacy has not been part the critical discussion of his history, except to discredit the legacy as “fascist propaganda.” Da Costa Meyer writes that the answer could “perhaps” be found in the cultural policies of the Fascist government, but she does not explain this theory in much detail. This is not surprising as at the time da Costa Meyer’s book was published, scholarship on Fascist cultural policies was in its infancy. It is only at the beginning of the 1990s that scholars of Fascism shifted their focus to the cultural politics of the Fascist regime. Historian Marla Stone explains in her article, “The State as Patron: Making Official Culture in Fascist Italy,” that “Postwar studies allowed room for only two camps – those who saw the cultural artifacts of the fascist era as the hack work of regime propagandists (and therefore devoid of aesthetic value) or those who recognized artworks as separate from political and social conditions.”⁷ Thankfully this attitude has changed. I agree with da Costa Meyer’s assertion that the source of the popularity of Sant’Elia’s legacy lies in understanding how culture functioned in Fascist Italy. Now, almost two decades after the publication of *Retreat into the Future: The Work of Antonio Sant’Elia*, I am able to use existing scholarship on Fascist culture, society, and politics to reexamine the context of Sant’Elia’s legacy as the figurehead of Futurist architecture.

I am also indebted to the work of Italian historian Emilio Gentile, as my argument relies heavily on Gentile’s theory of the “sacralization of politics.” In his book, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, and additional articles, Gentile argues that the Fascist government in Italy functioned as a political religion. Thus, it needs to be

⁷ Marla Stone, “The State as Patron: Making Official Culture in Fascist Italy,” in *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy*, ed. Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 210.

considered within the context of an organized religion. He explains that it is through this “fascist religion” that Mussolini’s government was able to unite the Italian population through myth, faith, ritual, and communion. Gentile identifies the myth and ritual surrounding Fascist soldiers who died in battle as the cult of the fallen. This is the myth I argue is associated with the legacy of Sant’Elia. Critics have noted that Gentile’s theory does not explain the whole of Italian Fascism, as there are elements of Fascism that identify themselves through methods other than religion.⁸ Another criticism is that Gentile’s “top-down” perspective of Italian Fascism does not adequately consider how the ideals of “fascist religion” projected by Mussolini’s government were disseminated to everyday Italians.⁹ Despite these criticisms, Gentile’s theory is useful in its ability to explain how Fascist society functioned.

Additionally, the works of Jeffrey T. Schnapp, Christine Poggi, and Emily Braun all play a significant role in the development of my argument. Jeffrey T. Schnapp is an Italian Studies scholar who has written extensively on Fascist Italy. His research into the 1932 *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution* supports Gentile’s theory of a “fascist religion” and gives greater insight to my discussion as to how myth and ritual functioned in Fascist society. Schnapp’s research explores how this exhibition functioned as a “Saint Peter’s

⁸ Zamponi, Simonetta Falasca, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997): 7-8.

⁹ David Atkinson, “Enculturing Fascism? Towards Historical Geographies of Inter-War Italy,” *Journal of Historical Geography* Vol. 25, No. 3 (1999): 395.

of fascism,” becoming a focal point of Fascist pilgrims.¹⁰ His discussion of the “Sacrarium of the Martyrs,” a gallery in the *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution* that was the physical representation of the cult of the fallen, supports my assertion of the prominence of this cult in Fascist society. Christine Poggi is an art historian who writes about Italian Futurism both before and after World War One. Her essay, “The Return of the Repressed: Tradition as Myth in Futurist Fascism,” in the compilation *Donatello among the Blackshirts*, highlights one way Futurist art evolved in the 1920s and ‘30s to remain relevant in Fascist Italy. Her discussion centers on the emergence of traditional faith and spirituality to Futurist painting of the 1930s, concluding, “By the early ‘30s, most Futurists had affirmed the values of traditional-bound moral and spiritual order under the sign of the Fascist regime.”¹¹ Emily Braun is an art historian working in the field of Fascist Italy. Her 2000 book, *Mario Sironi and Fascist Modernity*, was the first major work on Sironi to be published outside of Italy. Her discussion of Sironi, a former Futurist who strongly supported the Fascist regime, is not meant to free Sironi from his ties to Fascism. Rather, Braun seeks to place Sironi as an important figure in the discourse of Fascist modernity. While neither directly discuss Sant’Elia, the writings of both Poggi and Braun offer parallel arguments exploring how culture functioned in Fascist Italy.

¹⁰ Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “Epic Demonstrations: Fascist Modernity and the 1932 Exhibitions of the Fascist Revolution,” in *Fascism, Aesthetics, and Culture*, ed. by Richard J. Goslan. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992): 5.

¹¹ Christine Poggi, “The Return of the Repressed: Tradition as Myth in Futurist Fascism,” in *Donatello among the Blackshirts*, ed. by Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 221.

My understanding of Fascist architecture is further rooted in the work of Dennis P. Doordan and Richard A. Etlin. Their two books, *Building Modern Italy: Italian Architecture 1914 – 1936* by Doordan and *Modernism in Italian Architecture, 1890 – 1940* by Etlin, tackle the roles of Futurist, Rationalist, and *Novecento* architecture under Mussolini's government. Doordan devotes half of his book to the Rationalists, splitting the other half between Futurism and *Novecento*. He focuses strictly on the architecture, somewhat to the detriment of the text, as he leaves any discussion of politics to the final chapter of his book, "Progressive Architects and Fascist Politics." Etlin's *Modernism in Italian Architecture* spans five decades, in which Etlin gives a deeper discussion on the relationship between architecture and politics than is found in Doordan's text. Being published in 1989 and 1991, respectively, the two texts understandably lack a thorough analysis of Fascist cultural policies and their effect on architecture, but Etlin does not shy away from this topic.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter One discusses the development of Futurism after the conclusion of World War One and the death of Sant'Elia, in relation to the creation and promotion of Sant'Elia's legacy. This chapter will chronologically show the development of this legacy, and will outline the essential role it came to play during the interwar period. Despite limited involvement with the movement during his lifetime, Sant'Elia posthumously became a central figurehead in Second Futurism, the period of Italian Futurism that occurred during the 1920s and '30s. It is during this period that Sant'Elia becomes defined by the 1914 *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture* and his *La Città Nuova* series.

Chapter Two explains how society functioned in Fascist Italy. Utilizing Gentile's theory of the "sacralization of politics," this discussion will show how Mussolini and his Fascist government used "fascist religion" to permeate all aspects of Italian society. This chapter is divided into three sections: Italian Fascism and Society, Italian Fascism and the Church, and Italian Fascism and Fascist Culture. Italian Fascism and Society discusses how "fascist religion" united the Italian public through myth, faith, ritual, and communion. Italian Fascism and the Church focuses on the relationship of Mussolini's government with the Vatican and how the Fascist government sought to control the influence of the Catholic Church in order to expand the reach of its own "fascist religion." The final section, Italian Fascism and Fascist Culture, looks at the Fascist government's cultural policies and explains how these policies created a competitive environment for Futurism and other art movements during this period.

Chapter Three focuses on the legacy of Sant'Elia and the Fascist cult of the fallen. This chapter explains that as one of the myths used to unite Fascist society, the cult of the fallen, was prominently recognized and those hearing the legacy of Sant'Elia during this period would have understood his history within this myth. Additionally, this discussion shows that the rituals associated with the cult of the fallen were so popular during this period that they were even included in the 1932 *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution*, an exhibit organized by the Fascist government to celebrate the decennial anniversary of the March on Rome. The analysis in this chapter shows that Marinetti's decision to promote Sant'Elia as a Futurist architect while emphasizing his death in

World War One was a conscious decision to associate Sant'Elia with the cult of the fallen.

Chapter One

Second Futurism and the Development of Sant'Elia's Interwar Period Legacy

On October 23, 1921, Futurists, Socialists, and Fascists all gathered in the main cemetery in Como, Italy for one purpose – to celebrate the life of Antonio Sant'Elia. During this grand ceremony, held five years after Sant'Elia died fighting in World War One, he was reburied with full military honors while being glorified in a long succession of laudatory speeches. In one speech, Futurist Luigi Russolo praised Sant'Elia for his invention of the superior city of the future, his “Italianness,” and his fearlessness.¹² Placed upon his coffin was a wreath from the *Squadra d'Azione Fascista Antonio Sant'Elia*, a Fascist militia who took their name from the young architect.¹³ And despite the violent opposition by the Fascists in attendance, a member of the Socialist party also spoke at the ceremony.¹⁴ This occasion took place at a particularly sensitive period in Italian politics – the country was in the midst of a power struggle that would result in the Fascists' taking control of Italy one year later. More importantly, for the purpose of this discussion, this ceremony marks the beginning of the cult of Sant'Elia as the figurehead of Futurist architecture. This chapter will chronicle the evolution of Sant'Elia's posthumous legacy within the development of Second Futurism during the interwar period. After a brief introduction to both Italian Futurism and Sant'Elia, the discussion

¹² Caramel and Longatti, *Antonio Sant'Elia*, 59.

¹³ da Costa Meyer, *The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia*, 191.

¹⁴ Ibid.

will focus on the actions made by Marinetti to ensure that Italian Futurism remained relevant in Fascist Italy, and the role Sant'Elia's legacy played in Second Futurism.

Before World War One: Italian Futurism and Antonio Sant'Elia

When Marinetti founded the Futurist movement in 1909 with the publication of *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism* in the French newspaper, *Le Figaro*, he wrote of the glorification of war – what he described as “the world’s only hygiene” – and called for the destruction of history-holding institutions like libraries and museums.¹⁵ These ideas were representative of a deeper, nationalistic belief that Italy’s dependence on her historical past and her slow progression into industrial modernity, compared with other Western European nations, left her weak. This is why the machine, in particular the automobile, and later the airplane and the “new man,” were central themes in Futurist art. Art historian Giovanni Lista explains that the Futurists did not see themselves as a movement limited to art and literature. They believed that Futurism developed a new sensibility, a revolutionary approach to seeing the modern world unfolding around them.¹⁶ While Futurism is often considered a secondary movement in comparison to the artistic advances occurring in Paris during the same time, Futurism is the first internationally recognized modern art movement to emerge out of a united Italy. Lista

¹⁵ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” in *Le Figaro* (20 February 1909), trans. R.W. Flynn, *Futurist Manifesto*, ed. Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 22.

¹⁶ Giovanni Lista, *Futurism*, (Paris: Terrail, 2001), 10.

argues that the avant-garde began with the Futurists.¹⁷ Furthermore, Futurism reflected a change in the modern Italian psyche toward identification as a unified nation, as Futurism “was the first modern artistic expression of reunified Italy on a national scale,” and it “was the first identifying project of a modern Italian culture.”¹⁸ Soon after the publication of *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism*, Marinetti was joined by other Italian artists, including Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Gino Severini, and Giacomo Balla. Futurism was a full-fledged art movement by the following year. The next few years saw manifesto after manifesto published stipulating the Futurists’ position on painting, sculpture, music, cinema, photography, and theatre.

Born in 1888 to a middle class family living in Como, Italy, Sant’Elia joined the Futurists in 1914, but his architectural training had begun over a decade earlier when he enrolled at the *Istituto Gabriele Castellini* in 1903.¹⁹ He graduated three years later in 1906 as a building master, and shortly thereafter, Sant’Elia left Como to pursue a career in Milan.²⁰ That is where Sant’Elia found his first two jobs, first working on the Villoresi Canal irrigation project and then as a draftsman for Milan’s Department of Public Works.²¹ In the fall of 1909, Sant’Elia enrolled at the Brera Academy in Milan. Coincidentally, this was the same year that Marinetti published *The Founding and*

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid, 204-05.

¹⁹ da Costa Meyer, *The Work of Antonio Sant’Elia*, 13.

²⁰ Ibid, 13-14.

²¹ Ibid, 14.

Manifesto of Futurism. At Brera, Sant'Elia studied classical architecture and was instructed to carry on the “smelly gangrene of professors, archaeologists, *ciceroni* and antiquarians” that Marinetti’s manifesto rallied against.²² The Academy’s professors taught a Beaux Arts architectural curriculum that consisted of students spending their days copying historical styles.²³

Sant'Elia made his debut as a Futurist in July of 1914 with the publication of the *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture* (see appendix 1). With the addition of Sant'Elia, Marinetti expanded Italian Futurism into all of the arts.²⁴ Convincing Sant'Elia to join his movement was a success for Marinetti, as Sant'Elia’s recently completed series depicting the city of the future received favorable reviews when first exhibited with another Milanese avant-garde group a couple months earlier in May. Prior to joining the Futurists, Sant'Elia was member of the New Tendencies.²⁵ It was in the one and only

²² Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” 22.

²³ da Costa Meyer, *The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia*, 19.

²⁴ Futurism’s first official foray into architecture was in January of 1914, when Enrico Prampolini published his architecture manifesto, *The Futurist “Atmosphere-structure” - Basis for an Architecture*. It was originally release under the title, “Futurist Architecture Too...and What is It?” At this time Prampolini was a member of the Rome-based Futurist who gathered around painter Giacomo Balla, and was still a minor figure of the movement. Prampolini would later emerge as a prominent member of Second Futurism in the 1920s. As a text, Prampolini’s manifesto did little to tackle the concrete issues of transforming the Futurist ideals into architecture. He writes that “Futurist architecture must have an atmospheric genesis since it mirrors the intense life of *motion, light* and *air*,” but then does nothing to explain how this could be accomplished in a concrete manner, nor where any illustrations included. In the end, Prampolini’s manifesto was never officially accepted by Marinetti or published in the Futurists “official” magazine, *Lacerba*.

²⁵ The members of New Tendencies embraced Futurist aesthetics, but had no interest in the Futurists’ social or political agenda. New Tendencies openly disagreed with many aspects of Futurism and sought a more open dialogue with other contemporary movements across Europe. Unfortunately, New Tendencies’ aesthetic choices earned them the insulting nickname, the “right-wing of Futurism,” even though their work was calmer and far more representational than that of Futurism. Members of New Tendencies included Mario Chiattoni, Sant'Elia’s former classmate from the Academy and current studio partner whose father was an early collector of Futurist artworks, and Leonardo Dudreville, who after World

New Tendencies exhibit that Sant'Elia premiered his *La Città Nuova* series and its accompanying text, *Messaggio*. Both of these were quickly transformed into Futurist works. The *Messaggio* was the basis for the *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture*. The *La Città Nuova* was retitled *La Città Futurista* and was used to illustrate the *Manifesto*. The *Manifesto's* publication – first as a pamphlet in July of 1914 and the following month on the pages of *Lacerba* – introduced Sant'Elia as a Futurist architect using the same *La Città Nuova* series that had been shown in the New Tendencies exhibition.

Sant'Elia's involvement with Futurism, though, would be short and ambiguous. Sant'Elia never exhibited with the Futurists during his lifetime, and besides designing a book cover requested by Marinetti, he never created any specifically Futurist works.²⁶ Following the publication of *The Manifesto of Futurist Architecture*, Sant'Elia had very little interaction with the Futurists for about one year. Sant'Elia returned to Como to serve on a Socialist seat in the city's municipal council – a seat he curiously won days before the publication of the *Manifesto*. His involvement with the Socialist party is counter to Interventionalist political beliefs of the Futurists.²⁷ There is no indication that Sant'Elia, as a Socialist, disagreed with his party's antiwar stance regarding Italy's involvement in World War One. There were Socialist Party members who publically

War One joined the *Novecento* movement. While the precise date of New Tendencies founding is unknown, the group publically announced itself on March 20, 1914 in the magazine, *Pagine d'Arte*. Two months later in May, New Tendencies held its first and only exhibition at La Famiglia Artistica, a gallery that supported the Milanese avant-garde scene and a location where some of the Futurists had previously exhibited.

²⁶ da Costa Meyer, *The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia*, 182.

²⁷ Caramel and Longatti, *Antonio Sant'Elia*, 57.

took a pro-war stance and were subsequently expelled from the party. Benito Mussolini is the most notable example. It is not until the outbreak of war that Sant'Elia appears to rejoin the movement. In 1915, he joined the war effort with fellow Futurist and New Tendencies artists by enlisting in the Volunteer Lombardy Bicycle Unit.²⁸ In addition to Sant'Elia, the Bicycle Unit included Marinetti, Boccioni and Russolo – all of who were given a hero's send off when they rode through the streets of Milan for the front.²⁹ Sant'Elia's last Futurist act would be signing Marinetti's manifesto, *Italian Pride*, which celebrated the feats the Futurists had accomplished at war.³⁰ Overall, Sant'Elia appears to have been ambivalent about politics and war. There is no clarity as to Sant'Elia's positions on Futurism, Socialism, or World War One. He did not keep a journal, spoke little about his role as a Socialist politician,³¹ and two personal letters he did write about the war imply that he was drafted to fight, despite serving in the only all-volunteer corps of the Italian army.³² These unanswered questions left by Sant'Elia's death in combat on October 10, 1916 left ample room for a new narrative of his life.

²⁸ da Costa Meyer, *The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia*, 183.

²⁹ Philip V. Cannistraro and Brian R. Sullivan, *Il Duce's Other Woman* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1993): 55.

³⁰ Caramel Longatti, *Antonio Sant'Elia*, 57; da Costa Meyer, *The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia*, 185.

³¹ da Costa Meyer, *The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia*, 173.

³² I am referring to two postcards sent by Sant'Elia: one to sculptor Gerolamo Fontana, dated July 23, 1915, and the other sent to Sant'Elia's mother, dated June 30, 1916. To Fontana, Sant'Elia writes that he "was called up on the 1st of June," and Sant'Elia writes to his mother "it is not true that I volunteered." The full text of these postcards are quoted in da Costa Meyer's *The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia*, pages 183 and 186.

After World War One: Second Futurism

Futurism emerged from World War One broken. Thirteen Futurists died during the conflict, including not only Sant'Elia but also Umberto Boccioni, whose loss was a significant blow to the movement.³³ Forty-one returned from the front wounded, and Carlo Carrà, one of the original signatories to the *Manifesto of Futurist Painters* published in 1910, officially left the Futurist movement in 1915.³⁴ These challenges, along with the rise of Fascism in Italy, forced changes to the way Futurism carried itself as a movement. In contrast to pre-World War One Futurism, which functioned as a small group of artists assembled around Marinetti, Second Futurism was widespread and somewhat decentralized. Marinetti still served as the movement's leader, but he now oversaw hundreds of Futurists across Italy. This new reality of Second Futurism would lead to concerns from the established Futurists as to how to keep the movement united. This lack of unity is reflected in the inability to develop a clear program for Futurist architecture during the Fascist period.

In a move to reestablish the importance of Futurism as a relevant art movement during the interwar period, Marinetti organized the *Grande Esposizione Nazionale Futurista* in 1919. The exposition was held in Milan, the center of much of the pre-World War One Futurist activity. It featured over 450 Futurist works of art ranging from painting to freewordings to architecture, and was an opportunity for young Futurists to

³³ Caroline Tisdall and Angelo Bozzolla, *Futurism* (London; New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1993), 179.

³⁴ Ibid, 179; 188-189.

debut their work in public.³⁵ The amount and variety of art pieces exhibited exemplifies the difference between pre- and post-war Futurism. Before the war, the Futurists were a coordinated organization primarily centered in the northern Italian city of Milan, where the movement remained under the close supervision of Marinetti. There was an exclusivity given to being a Futurist prior to the war – membership was not open to any artist who wished to join.³⁶ This all changed after World War One. Marinetti, possibly in a bid to ensure the continuation of his movement, became far more generous with Futurist membership. As a result, the movement became decentralized as he encouraged more and more young Italian artists to join. Second Futurism existed as a collection of small groups that were formed around regions, provinces, or cities throughout Italy.³⁷ This is how Marinetti was able to gather over 400 Futurist works in 1919, even though Futurism had been greatly impacted by the war. The *Grande Esposizione Nazionale Futurista* shows that while Marinetti and his personality still served as the figurehead of Futurism, the movement he started in 1909 now inspired many new vocations and trends.³⁸

With Second Futurism being more widespread and varied than before the war, Marinetti needed to address the issue of how to keep his movement united visually and theoretically. This task was difficult to achieve and established members of the

³⁵ Lista, *Futurism*, 128.

³⁶ da Costa Meyer, *The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia*, 166.

³⁷ Lista, *Futurism*, 154.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 128.

movement doubted Marinetti's ability to do so. Fortunato Depero, who officially became involved with the Futurists in 1915 when he co-authored the *Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe* with Giacomo Balla and emerged as a core member of the movement after World War One, believed the reason for Futurism's lack of unity after World War One was Marinetti's eagerness to allow anyone who was interested in the movement to join.³⁹ Because the hundreds of artists who now considered themselves Futurists were working somewhat independently of each other, keeping tight controls on the visual output proved difficult. As a result, Futurist rhetoric came to play an even more important role in uniting the varied artists of Second Futurism.⁴⁰ This rhetoric included manifestos, shared terminology, and the development of a shared history. The legacy of Sant'Elia came to play a central role in this aspect of Second Futurism.

The development of Futurist architecture after World War One reflected the decentralized, autonomous reality of Second Futurism. A concrete program for Futurist architecture did not develop during the interwar period. As a result, Futurist architecture was largely represented through furniture, interior design, and temporary exhibition buildings.⁴¹ Key examples of architectural works from the Second Futurist period are the table and chairs designed for *La Casa d'Arte Italiana* in 1919 and the Futurist Pavilion at the 1928 *Esposizione di Torino*, both designed by Enrico Prampolini, along with

³⁹ Dennis P. Doordan, *Building Modern Italy* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), 26.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture*, 97.

Fortunato Depero's book shop for the Third Monza Biennale in 1927.⁴² In an effort to renew the progression of Futurist architecture right after the war, Marinetti initially turned to the Italian architect, Virgilio Marchi. Marchi first met Marinetti in 1915 when they were both stationed at the same army artillery school.⁴³ Marchi's involvement with the Futurists steadily increased over the years and culminated on February 29, 1920, in the publication of a new *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture* in the Futurist journal, *Roma Futurista*.⁴⁴ Marchi's manifesto followed the typical pattern of Futurist manifestos. In it he rejected all non-Futurist work, arguing for architecture that reflected the modern sensibility of the twentieth century.⁴⁵ The architectural ideas Marchi spoke of did not contradict pre-war Futurism, and he acknowledged within this manifesto the debt that he owed to Sant'Elia as his predecessor. Overall, Marchi's new architectural manifesto did not offer any significant advances in the development of Futurist architecture.⁴⁶ Marchi's manifesto was also accompanied by drawings, though the "banality and vagueness" of his writing was also reflected in his illustrations.⁴⁷ Marchi did not find success as a Futurist architect, and today the architecture of Second Futurism is primarily defined by the work of Prampolini and Depero.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Doordan, *Building Modern Italy*, 19.

⁴⁴ Doordan, *Building Modern Italy*, 19; Whyte, "The Architecture of Futurism," 365.

⁴⁵ Doordan, *Building Modern Italy*, 19.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 19-20.

⁴⁷ Whyte, "The Architecture of Futurism," 365.

Second Futurism and the Rise of Fascism

The triumph of Fascism in 1922 gave new purpose to the Futurist movement. With the success of the March on Rome in October of that year and the installment of Mussolini as the prime minister of the Italian government, the Futurists claimed to have a special status, making them the authoritative voice on the issue of state art on the basis of the relationship between their movement's founder and the new leader of the Fascist government.⁴⁸ Earning the honor to visually represent the Fascist government became Marinetti's focus throughout the 1920s and '30s. Marinetti and Mussolini had been friends for several years by 1922. The two men united over their nationalistic, pro-war political outlook prior to World War One and were arrested together in 1915 for their involvement in an Interventionist protest in Rome. Four years later as Mussolini's Fascist political party took shape, Marinetti made an unsuccessful run for a Fascist parliament seat in November of 1919.⁴⁹ As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Fascist militia members – though not Mussolini himself – were also in attendance at Sant'Elia's grand reburial in 1921.

With Mussolini's rise to power, the Futurists repeatedly tried to connect their movement with the Fascist government. They believed that the two groups' earlier connections gave the Futurists the sole right to be the “artistic interpreters” of the new government.⁵⁰ In April of the following year the Futurists published “The Artistic Rights

⁴⁸ Doordan, *Building Modern Italy*, 20-22.

⁴⁹ Tisdall and Bozzolla, *Futurism*, 204.

⁵⁰ Doordan, *Building Modern Italy*, 22.

Advocated by Italian Futurists: A Manifesto to the Fascist Government,” in which they argued that the Fascist revolution must support the artistic revolution lead by the Futurists.⁵¹ This manifesto was notable, as it was the first concrete proposal given to the newly established Fascist government addressing state involvement in the arts.⁵² Several years later in 1929, the Futurist artist Fillia wrote in the Torinese journal *La Città Futurista* that “[o]nly Futurists...have the right to speak of State Art.”⁵³ The invitation asking the Futurists to take part in the 2nd Biennale Romana in 1925 marked the beginning of Futurism’s official artistic involvement with Fascist government – giving hope to Marinetti and his fellow Futurists. This was the first time Futurist artwork was be displayed at a government-sponsored event. The Futurists would participate in the Fascist regime’s main cultural events from this point forward.

During the thirties, the Futurists’ new emphasis on the airplane can be directly connected to the positive growth in the relationship between Futurism and the Fascist regime. This aerial theme – known as *aeropittura* (“aeropainting”) – came to dominate a decade of Futurist art. In 1929 Marinetti was appointed to the Royal Academy of Italy and just six months later, the *Manifesto of Futurist Aeropainting* was published. As Giovanni Lista explains, “the purpose of this new appointment was to add a new aura to the founder of Futurism, at the time when the Fascist regime was undertaking a vast industrial restructuring, giving aeronautics a primary role.” In exchange for the Futurists

⁵¹ Ibid, 23.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

embracing the Fascist push into aeronautics, Futurist aeropainting was now being promoted by the Fascist government “as the liveliest example of Italian modern art.”⁵⁴ In 1934, the *Futurist Manifesto of Aero-Architecture*, signed by Marinetti, along with architect Angioli Mazzoni and journalist Mino Somenzi, was published.⁵⁵ Marinetti’s appointment to the Royal Academy of Italy strengthened Futurism’s relationship with Fascism and came to make the legacy of Sant’Elia even more pertinent.

The Legacy of Sant’Elia within Second Futurism

The development of Sant’Elia’s legacy as the figurehead of Futurist architecture coincides with Second Futurism’s growing involvement with Mussolini and the Fascist government. During the 1920s and ‘30s, as Futurism’s participation in Fascist cultural events grew, Marinetti carefully erased Sant’Elia’s Socialist background through speeches and carefully curated exhibits. He replaced Sant’Elia’s connections with Socialism with new connections to Fascism. Marinetti ensured that the words of the *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture* and the images of the *La Città Futurista* series, formerly *La Città Nuova*, defined Sant’Elia as an architect. Furthermore, homage to Sant’Elia became obligatory for all new members of Second Futurism, giving Sant’Elia cult status within the movement.

In his role as the leader of Futurism, Marinetti had many opportunities in speeches, ceremonies, and exchanged with Fascist elite to glorify Sant’Elia as a true

⁵⁴ Lista, *Futurism*, 180.

⁵⁵ Whyte, “The Architecture of Futurism,” 370.

Fascist and the father of Italian modern architecture. In March of 1924, while dressed as a Fascist boss, Marinetti gave a speech in which he praised his fellow Futurists for being the “foremost fascists,” while singling out Sant’Elia, “whose prophetic merits were envied and admired by ‘countless artists’ abroad.”⁵⁶ On the eve of the 1928 Futurist Festival in Turin, which was to be “the first exhibit of absolutely modern architecture in Italy,” Marinetti wrote to Mussolini, reminding him of his promised patronage of the event.⁵⁷ With this letter, Marinetti explains to Mussolini that the Futurist Festival will “continue the artistic revolution begun by architect Sant’Elie [sic], who revolutionized world architecture eighteen years ago, died gloriously on the Karst, and is today imitated everywhere from Le Corbusier to Mallet-Stevens.”⁵⁸

In September of 1930 – the year after Marinetti was appointed to the Royal Academy – a formal ceremony was held in honor of Sant’Elia in Como. There was an exhibition dedicated to Sant’Elia, to him as a person and to his work, while numerous speeches were given, including ones by the Futurists Mario Carli, Enrico Prampolini, and Escodamé.⁵⁹ As Marinetti ventured into the more regional and local Futurist groups, he continued to use Sant’Elia as a figure of a common heritage. For all the new, young artists who wished to join the ranks of Second Futurism, homage to Sant’Elia as an

⁵⁶ Caramel and Longatti, *Antonio Sant’Elia*, 60.

⁵⁷ Günter Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909 – 1944* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996): 283.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Caramel and Longatti, *Antonio Sant’Elia*, 60.

architectural pioneer was key to becoming a Futurist.⁶⁰ In this way, Sant'Elia served as a shared historical figure for everyone involved in Futurism. When inaugurating the *Prima Mostra Futuristi Padovani* in January of 1931, Marinetti chose to lecture on Antonio Sant'Elia and Futurist architecture.⁶¹ Another example of Sant'Elia homage is Nino Burrasca's poem, entitled *Sant'Elia*. Considered a eulogy to Sant'Elia for his martyrdom, Burrasca's poem won the *Primo Circuito Triveneto Aeropoesia* in Trieste on March 7, 1931.⁶² In this regard, the myth of Sant'Elia – and the requirement for the newest members of Futurism to pay homage to him – functioned as a unifier, as a shared history that united the scatterings of Italian Futurism throughout Italy.

It is during this period that Sant'Elia's work was prominently displayed in exhibitions across Italy, including being given his own room at the fifth Triennial in Milan in 1933, and every important critic in Italy praised Sant'Elia's greatness.⁶³ It is important to recognize that, while Sant'Elia's work was widely exhibited during this period, it was a curated selection of his work. It was key that the work exhibited be read as Futurist. Marinetti was well aware of this, and worked until his death to ensure that some works by Sant'Elia – that were deemed not Futurist enough – would never be shown to the public.⁶⁴ The 1930s Milan Triennials were important vehicles for the

⁶⁰ Ibid, 61.

⁶¹ Willard Bohn, *The Other Futurism: Futurist Activity in Venice, Padua and Verona*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 73.

⁶² Ibid, 81.

⁶³ Doordan, *Building Modern Italy*, 114.

⁶⁴ Jörn-Peter Schmidt-Thomsen, "Sant'Elia: Futurista of the Achilles Heel of the Futurists," *Daidalos: Berlin Architectural Journal* Vol. 1 No. 2 (1981): 37.

promotion of progressive architecture, and thus Sant'Elia's inclusion with his own gallery exemplifies how important he had become by 1933 not to just the Futurists, but to all Italians.⁶⁵ In October of 1933 the title of the magazine *Futurismo*, which served as a political outlet for the Futurists, was changed to *Sant'Elia*.⁶⁶ This renaming of the magazine served to further deepen the connection between Sant'Elia and the Futurists' political agenda – that is, to become the official state art of the Fascist government – disregarding any factual relation to Sant'Elia's own personal political beliefs. By the middle of the 1930s, Sant'Elia had been transformed into a Fascist hero by the plethora of exhibits and publications that had been promoting his work.⁶⁷

In the two decades after his death, Antonio Sant'Elia was transformed into a cult figure.⁶⁸ His legacy developed alongside the rise of Fascism in Italy and became a central narrative in Second Futurism. As his popularity grew steadily throughout the 1920s and exploded in the 1930s, Sant'Elia posthumously took on a much greater role in Futurism than he had ever held during his lifetime. While his interactions with Futurism prior to World War One were limited, the lack of writing or other documentation from Sant'Elia expressing his opinions on Futurism, Socialism, and war meant that his life was open to reinterpretation by Marinetti. The legacy of Sant'Elia became an essential figure

⁶⁵ Doordan, *Building Modern Italy*, 113.

⁶⁶ Whyte, "The Architecture of Futurism," 371.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture*, 97.

in the rhetoric of Futurism and a part of the shared history in the now greatly expanded ranks of Second Futurism. As will be discuss in the following chapters, Sant'Elia's legacy was a result of the changing cultural landscape in Italy under the new Fascist government. During this period of Italian history, it became necessary to align oneself with Fascism in order to survive.

Chapter Two

Society, Church, and Culture in Fascist Italy

When Futurism emerged from World War One, Marinetti not only had to rebuild his movement, but he also had to navigate a new cultural climate brought on by political change. After several years of political instability following the end of World War One, Italy entered its Fascist era with the installation of Benito Mussolini as prime minister in October of 1922. This chapter will focus on three areas of the Fascist government: how the Fascist government controlled Italian society; the relationship between the Fascist government and the Vatican; and Fascist cultural policies and the promotion of modern art and architecture. The interwoven network created by Fascist society, church, and culture lays the foundation for how the myth of Sant'Elia was able to further united Futurist rhetoric with that of Fascism, while underlining the necessity to align oneself with Fascism to succeed.

Italian Fascism and Society

When Mussolini took control of the Italian government, he promised Italy stability. This was achieved by creating an omnipresent state that inserted itself into all aspects of its citizens' lives. Italian Fascism was an ultra-nationalistic political movement that proclaimed itself as the third solution between the two extremes of capitalism and communism. For Fascists, the prosperity of the nation came above all else. This is epitomized in the popular Fascist slogan, "Everything within the State,

nothing against the State, nothing outside the State.”⁶⁹ One of Fascism’s problems with other movements, like Socialism and feminism, was that they gave greater importance to specific groups of people over the wellbeing of the country as a whole. Once he became head of the Italian government, Mussolini made it very clear that he had no intentions of ever stepping down voluntarily.⁷⁰ This essentially turned his rule into a totalitarian regime. By forcing itself onto Italian society, the Fascist government created an environment where one’s success was inevitably linked to retaining a good standing with the Fascist National Party. It was important for Italian citizens to be engaged with Fascism, whether or not they actually supported the party. This section will show that through the creation of a “fascist religion,” the Fascist government succeeded in establishing a cult of the regime that united the Italian population through Fascism in the name of patriotism and nationalism.⁷¹

To explain “fascist religion,” I am using a theory put forth by Italian historian Emilio Gentile.⁷² Gentile introduced his theory of the ‘sacralization of politics’ in the 1990s as Fascism scholarship shifted, and scholars took an interest in the cultural aspects

⁶⁹ David Evans. *Understanding Mussolini’s Italy*. (London: Hodder Education, 2012.): 61.

⁷⁰ Alexander De Grand, *Italian Fascism: It’s Origins & Development* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989): 41.

⁷¹ Through this statement, I am not implying that every Italian agreed with Fascism. I am merely stressing that Mussolini’s Fascist government did not give its citizens the option to make that decision.

⁷² Emilio Gentile has written extensively on the topic of political religion. The works of Gentile’s that I am utilizing for my research are “Fascism as Political Religion,” published in 1990, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, published in 1996, “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretations,” published in 2004, and “The Myth of National Regeneration in Italy: From Modernist Avant-Garde to Fascism,” a chapter within *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy* published in 1997.

of Fascism. Gentile defines this term as “the formation of a religious dimension in politics that is distinct from and autonomous from traditional religious institutions.”⁷³

Gentile argues that functioning as a political religion allowed Fascism to successfully insert itself into the lives of everyday Italians. In his book, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, Gentile makes the argument that Italian Fascism needs to be viewed as a political religion because the Fascists themselves thought of the movement that way. They built a national religion on the foundations of Christianity, but rooted it in Italian tradition. A “fascist religion” allowed the government to unify its people through myth, faith, ritual and communion.⁷⁴ At this time Italy was still a young country, having only begun the unification process six decades earlier in 1861 and there were still many regional differences when Mussolini came to power. Mussolini made Fascism the unifying element of Italian society, and ensuring that it permeated society became his obsession.⁷⁵

Many Italians viewed the idea of a national religion favorably as it was openly discussed in Italian society.⁷⁶ It was particularly popular amongst two factions of Italian society: World War One veterans and intellectuals. Many veterans regarded their time fighting for Italy as sacred and many Italian intellectuals viewed a national religion as a

⁷³ Emilio Gentile, “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretation,” trans. Natalia Belozentseva, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2004): 327.

⁷⁴ Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, trans. by Keith Botsford. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996): x.

⁷⁵ Evans, *Understanding Mussolini's Italy*, 79.

⁷⁶ Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, 16.

solution to the search for faith that younger generations of Italians were currently going through as they rejected traditional religion.⁷⁷ These young Italians had come to age during the war and were filled with anticipation of a surge of post-war idealism. They did not identify with the Catholic Church. Considered by some to be “a religion for losers,” Christianity was viewed as an international religion that put God and the world before Italians and their country.⁷⁸ This resulted in many young Italians leaving the Catholic Church all together.⁷⁹ This did not mean, however, that these Italians lacked faith or a belief in a bigger purpose. It was quite the opposite. They were among the population in Italy who believed that a new lay religion should be developed to fulfill the needs of modern Italians who were being left unfulfilled by traditional religion.⁸⁰ By developing a “fascist religion,” the Fascist government was fulfilling a need of its citizens while promoting their own agenda.

The formalization of the Fascist Party further cemented its function as a secular religion by creating its own set of beliefs, myths, and rituals.⁸¹ Any and all members of the Fascist party, regardless of rank, propagated the “fascist religion”.⁸² It was during the

⁷⁷ Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, 7; Valerio De Cesaris, “The Catholic Church and Italian Fascism at the Breaking Point: A Cultural Perspective,” *Telos* No. 164 (2013): 162.

⁷⁸ De Cesaris, “The Catholic Church and Italian Fascism,” 162-163.

⁷⁹ Emilio Gentile, “The Myth of National Regeneration in Italy: From Modernist Avant-Garde to Fascism,” in *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy*, ed. Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff. Trans. by Maria Tannenbaum. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 33.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Emilio Gentile, “Fascism as Political Religion,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 25, No. 2/3 (1990): 230.

⁸² Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, 59.

early years of Fascist rule, from 1923 to 1926, that the government strongly emphasized the religious elements of Fascism to assert their power over Italy.⁸³ The regime's newly established rituals linked traditional Catholic themes and rites commonplace in Italian life with Fascist ideology.⁸⁴ An example of this is the change in how public space functioned. Public squares in Italy were transformed into "sacred spaces," making them the Fascist equivalent of the church building.⁸⁵ Decorated with the regalia of the Fascist regime, it was in these sacred public squares that Italians gathered to celebrate the state on any number of occasions. The Fascist calendar imposed new holidays to increase the ritual of state celebration. These included the founding of Rome on April 21, the birth of Augustus on September 23 and the anniversary of the March on Rome on October 28. Historian James E. Young explains in his essay, "Memory/Monument," that states create a common national identity through monuments, national days and shared calendars – all of which unite the populous through shared common memories, and project shared values and ideas.⁸⁶ This is exactly how Mussolini united the Italian public through a "fascist religion."

⁸³ Ibid, 55.

⁸⁴ Poggi, "The Return of the Repressed," 219-220.

⁸⁵ Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, 30.

⁸⁶ James E. Young, "Memory/Monument," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. by Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003): 237.

Italian Fascism and the Church

The 1929 Lateran Pacts were official agreements between the Fascist government and the Vatican that further legitimized the regime. On February 11, 1929, Mussolini and Cardinal Gasparri, the Vatican Secretary of State signed the Lateran Pacts after three years of negotiations. Mussolini was a shrewd politician, and he knew that unlike other factions in Italy – such as the media, opposition political parties, and labor unions – the Church could not be forced into submission.⁸⁷ The Lateran Pacts were a result of years of positive gestures towards the Vatican by Mussolini backed by pro-church legislation, and marked the high point in the cautious and complicated relationship between the Fascist government and the Vatican.

The Lateran Pacts consisted of a Concordat, a financial convention, and a treaty. This agreement was a major triumph for Mussolini, as it put to rest ‘the Roman question’ that had plagued Italy since its unification. The Lateran Pacts established the boundaries of a sovereign Vatican State with full diplomatic rights, gave the Vatican financial compensation for the loss of its pre-1870 territories, and most importantly, established what independent activities the Church could carry out without conflicting with the Fascist regime. The Church won approval for religious education, now included in both primary and secondary schools, and received legitimacy for church marriages, which no longer had to be followed by a civil marriage.⁸⁸ The agreement did force the Vatican, however, to drastically reduce its youth activities. The Church conceded its sporting and

⁸⁷ Martin Clark, *Modern Italy: 1871 to the present* (Harlow, U.K.: Pearson Education Ltd, 2008), 304.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 305.

physical education activities to the *Opera Nazionale Balilla*, the Fascists' youth organization.⁸⁹ This strict outline of what the Church could and could not do allowed the Fascist government control over the amount of influence the Vatican had over the Italian population. This was Mussolini's way of ensuring that the teachings of the Catholic Church would not interfere with Fascist propaganda.

Mussolini was deeply anti-clerical.⁹⁰ Despite his personal beliefs, Mussolini realized the importance of the Catholic Church backing his Fascist government. He knew that without the support of the Church, his government would never receive approval from the rest of the Catholic world.⁹¹ Shortly after taking power, Mussolini's government passed a series of measures favorable to the Vatican. This legislation included measures that stipulated "mandatory teaching of religion in State schools; mandatory display of a crucifix in schools and tribunals; raises in the salaries of the clergy and the bishops; restorations with State funds of many churches damaged by World War I; grants to schools managed by religious orders; and state recognition of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan."⁹² The government also enacted strict press laws in 1923 allowing it to suspend publications that "preached class hatred or disrespect for the monarchy, the Catholic Church, or the state."⁹³ Mussolini did not limit

⁸⁹ De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 76.

⁹⁰ De Cesaris, "The Catholic Church and Italian Fascism," 154.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid, 154-155.

⁹³ De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 55.

himself to just government actions. In 1925 he remarried his wife in a church, ten years after they wed in a civil ceremony, and he baptized his three eldest children, despite the fact that they were past the typical age for baptism.⁹⁴ These were all very public gestures done by Mussolini and the Fascist government to win the support of the Vatican.

The relationship between the Fascist government and the Catholic Church was not without tension. While the Vatican was initially wary of Fascism's violent tactics, particularly before 1922, and would later disagree with the government's 1938 anti-Semitic laws, a more longstanding disagreement between the two was "fascist religion."⁹⁵ The Fascist regime constantly propagandized its own religion while inhibiting the Catholic Church's ability to do the same. The church and its organizations were not allowed to use banners, standards, or insignia that used the colors of the pontifical flag.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the government also encouraged the use of civil bell towers at Fascist headquarters.⁹⁷ This "war of symbols," as Gentile describes it, exemplifies the real threat that the Vatican posed to Mussolini's government.

Italian Fascism and Fascist Culture

To be clear from the start, there was never an official State art of Italy's Fascist government. What Mussolini and his government did do, however, was create an

⁹⁴ Clark, *Modern Italy*, 305.

⁹⁵ Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, 16 and 54; De Cesaris, "The Catholic Church and Italian Fascism," 153.

⁹⁶ Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, 71.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

environment that encouraged artistic and architectural movements in Italy to compete for an honor that Mussolini never intended on awarding. This was done through surprisingly tolerant views on the range of styles and themes used by artists and architects chosen to create works representing Fascism.⁹⁸ Mussolini's tolerant position played into a larger intellectual debate in Italy regarding the lack of a strong Fascist culture. This strategy gained both recognition and legitimacy for the Fascist government, as it encouraged a wide range of Italians to participate in the public initiatives of the regime, even if the participants did not actively identify themselves as Fascists.⁹⁹ This section will discuss the Fascist government's cultural policies and the attempted development of a Fascist culture while introducing *Novecento* and Rationalism, the two movements competing alongside Futurism to be chosen as the State art of Fascist Italy.

Having a strong Italian culture was key to the Fascist government's expansionist desires, as it was a way to promote Italian influence abroad, but it was also of concern to the Italian artistic community.¹⁰⁰ Under Fascism, art did not remain a separate sphere of society – it was considered part of politics.¹⁰¹ Culture became another tool of Mussolini's to engage the Italian public in Fascist affairs and to continue to gain legitimacy for his government. The Royal Italian Academy, which Marinetti joined by

⁹⁸ Claudia Lazzaro, "Forging a Visible Fascist Nation: Strategies for Fusing Past and Present," in *Donatello among the Blackshirts*, ed. by Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 14.

⁹⁹ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy 1922-1945*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001): 9.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 6.

¹⁰¹ Günter Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics*, 10.

invitation in 1929, is an example of Mussolini's inclusion policy, as its mission was to flatter Italian intellectuals and to involve them with the Fascist government.¹⁰² Fascist culture, however, was also of great concern to those who supported the Fascist regime. Those of the Italian artistic community who were engaged with Fascism wanted the development of a State art that would represent the whole of the Italian people. These artists saw the separation between Italian culture and politics as the primary reason that Italy was slow to adapt to the advances of modernity.¹⁰³ They argued that a new, deeper relationship between culture and politics would re-energize Italy both intellectually and morally.¹⁰⁴ This issue engaged many artists and architects during this period; it did not solely concern the Futurists.

Alongside the development of Second Futurism discussed in the previous chapter, the mainstream development in European modern art was the idea of a "return to order."¹⁰⁵ This change was a reaction to living through World War One. After the chaos of war it was necessary to organize one's life, and within the visual arts looking to antiquity became a way to do that.¹⁰⁶ Artists who supported this idea felt that the pre-war avant-gardes had caused a schism in the development of art by rejecting the basic

¹⁰² Clark, *Modern Italy*, 292.

¹⁰³ Gentile, "The Myth of National Regeneration," 30.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ The "return to classicism" movement in art was not unique to Italy. It is seen in art from France and Germany as well. While I am unable to discuss this trend outside of Italy within this text, see Kenneth E. Silver, *Chaos and Classicism: Art in France, Italy and Germany, 1918-1936* (2010), for an overview of this trend during the interwar period.

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth E. Silver, "A More Durable Self," in *Chaos and Classicism: Art in France, Italy, and Germany, 1918-1936*, ed. Kenneth E. Silver. (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2010), 20.

principles of figuration and perspective. This change in artistic perspective presented a challenge to the Futurists. Marinetti wanted Futurism to be an integral part of the new cultural environment in Italy, but the Futurists often found themselves sidelined in these discussions.¹⁰⁷ The Futurist's violent rhetoric went from being shocking to actually representing the horrors of warfare Europe just experienced. This distaste for the prewar avant-garde was not directly only at the Futurists, as the trend across Western Europe saw contemporary artists returning to a style of art firmly cemented in the traditions of the past. This reverence of tradition was counter to everything that Futurism was based on, thus essentially leaving Futurism out of the mainstream dialogue of their contemporaries. Within Italy, these "return to order" artists were embracing Italy's rich artistic history – instead of rejecting it as the Futurists did. They wanted to learn from the artists of the *Trecento* and *Quattrocento*, applying these traditions to the art of the day. There was the desire to create a style of art that was simultaneously classicizing and modern.

Two groups in Italy promoting this new ideal were *Novecento* and the Rationalists. *Novecento* artists sought to create a distinctly Italian modernity by embracing "the same interplays of elementary forms and volumes found in early Renaissance masters," while still celebrating the new.¹⁰⁸ The name *Novecento* was significantly chosen to harken back to the historical significance of the Italian

¹⁰⁷ Lista, *Futurism*, 194.

¹⁰⁸ Catherine E. Paul and Barbara Zaczek, "Margherita Sarfatti and Italian Cultural Nationalism," *Modernism/modernity*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (2006), 892.

Renaissance and to avoid the “isms” of the avant-gardes.¹⁰⁹ While its members had discussed a new artistic style since 1920, *Novecento* was officially founded in October of 1922 and had its first group exhibit the following year. Originally consisting of a loose gathering of seven artists – including Leonardo Dudreville, a former member of New Tendencies, and Mario Sironi – the *Novecento* artists were supported and promoted by Margherita Sarfatti.

To understand the weight that Sarfatti’s support held in the 1920s, it is important to take a brief look at her life up until that point. Sarfatti had fully established herself in the dual worlds of modern Italian art and Fascist politics by the time she took a role in founding the *Novecento* group in 1923. A Venetian of Jewish-descent who moved to Milan in 1902, Sarfatti had hosted pre-war weekly Wednesday night salons. Her salons became a favorite engagement for those in the Milanese avant-garde scene. During this period she was not only a strong supporter of avant-garde artists, but also a prominent supporter of socialism. Attendees of her weekly salons included Futurists, like Umberto Boccioni and Marinetti, members of New Tendencies, such as Dudreville and Sant’Elia, and often fellow Socialists, including the young Benito Mussolini.¹¹⁰ During these social engagements her relationship with Mussolini deepened. She became not only the art critic for his newspaper, *Il Popolo d’Italia*, but also his mistress. When in October of 1914 Mussolini publically declared his pro-war stance in the pages of *Avanti!*, he put his

¹⁰⁹ Emily Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism: Art and Politics under Fascism*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 91.

¹¹⁰ Philip V. Cannistraro and Brian R. Sullivan, *Il Duce’s Other Woman* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1993): 72; Graziella Marchicelli, “Futurism and fascism: the politicization of art and the aestheticization of politics, 1909-1914” (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1996), 22.

standing within the party into doubt.¹¹¹ When he refused to change his stance, Mussolini was expelled from the Socialist Party that same year. Sarfatti followed suit, leaving the Socialism to join Mussolini's Fascist movement.¹¹²

By the time Sarfatti reached her fortieth birthday in 1920, she “enjoyed renown as an art critic, author, and advocate of the avant-garde among culturally sophisticated Italians.”¹¹³ With her affair with Mussolini going strong, Sarfatti became a trusted arts and culture advisor when Mussolini took control of Italy in 1922. As historians Catherine E. Paul and Barbara Zaczek note when discussing this aspect of Sarfatti and Mussolini's relationship, “[t]he collaboration was cemented because Sarfatti's cultural objectives converged with Mussolini's political goals: he was committed to restoring the social and economic order in Italy in the name of modernization; she sought to establish a school of artists whose work was at once modern and classicizing, invested in innovation and committed to a ‘return to order.’”¹¹⁴ This new role later earned Sarfatti the nickname, “dictator of culture.”¹¹⁵ She used her new status to promote the “return to order” trend that she was seeing in Italian art. *Novecento* and Sarfatti were both of concern to Marinetti as they posed significant competition to his desire to have Futurism named as the State art of the Fascist government. Along with adjusting to the new

¹¹¹ De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 17.

¹¹² Jeffrey T. Schnapp, ed., *A Primer of Italian Fascism*. Trans. by Jeffrey T. Schnapp et al. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000): 242.

¹¹³ Cannistraro and Sullivan, *Il Duce's Other Woman*, 265.

¹¹⁴ Paul and Zaczek, “Margherita Sarfatti,” 890.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 894.

Fascist cultural climate, competition from someone with the status of Sarfatti¹¹⁶ showed that Marinetti and the Futurists could not solely rely on Marinetti's personal ties to Mussolini in order to achieve a greater status for their arts.

The Rationalists were a group of architects who placed themselves as a moderate choice between the archaic language of the *Novecento* and the explosive rhetoric of the Futurists.¹¹⁷ They sought to create architecture that utilized modern materials and building techniques to “evoke the spirit of a machine age,” while at the same time grounding their ideas within Italian tradition.¹¹⁸ Rationalist architecture was born in December of 1926 when a series of four articles was published by Gruppo 7 announcing a “new spirit” in Italian architecture.¹¹⁹ This group of seven consisted of architecture students from the Polytechnic University of Milan, and included Ubaldo Castagnoli, Luigi Figini, Guido Frette, Sebastiano Larco, Gino Pollini, Carlo Enrico Rava, and Giuseppe Terragni.¹²⁰ Just two years later in 1928, the First Italian Exposition of Rational Architecture was held in Rome and a national movement known as the

¹¹⁶ Fearing for her safety as a Jewish woman after the enactment of Italy's 1938 anti-semitic laws, Sarfatti decided to leave Italy late that year. She first resided in Paris and shortly after established a residence in Monte Video, Uruguay in early 1939. Her relationship with Mussolini ended in 1936 and rising anti-semiticism made her a social pariah. Unbeknownst to Sarfatti, Mussolini personally ensured the expediting of her immigration documentations so that she could leave Paris quickly and legally. She did not return to Italy until 1947. See *Il Duce's Other Woman*, by Philip V. Cannistrato and Brian R. Sullivan, for a comprehensive narrative of Sarfatti's life.

¹¹⁷ Kenneth Frampton, “Giuseppe Terragni and the architecture of Italian Rationalism 1926-43,” in *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (New York: Thames and Hudson Inc., 1992), 203.

¹¹⁸ Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture*, 226.

¹¹⁹ Doordan, *Building Modern Italy*, 45.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Movimento Italiano per l'Architettura Razionale was formed.¹²¹ In 1931 the Rationalists began their campaign – counter to the Futurists – for their style of architecture to not only be identified with Fascism, but also to become the state architecture.¹²²

Sant'Elia became a subject of tension between Futurism and Rationalism, but Marinetti turned this disagreement into further promotion for his movement. The Rationalists claimed Sant'Elia as their “patron saint,” a father figure of their movement.¹²³ Working in a modern, international style of architecture left the Rationalists vulnerable to critics denouncing their work as anti-Italian.¹²⁴ To counter these claims, the Rationalists cemented their style in the work of Sant'Elia, an Italian architect.¹²⁵ Art historian Christine Poggi explains “the modernist aesthetic in architecture could be understood as both Italian and cosmopolitan, if its progenitor were the Futurist Sant'Elia.”¹²⁶ While the Futurists initially rejected the Rationalists' claims to Sant'Elia, Marinetti, as a shrewd leader, came to accept their assertions.¹²⁷ An agenda for Futurist architecture did not develop, and by accepting the Rationalists' claim to Sant'Elia, Marinetti transitioned Futurism to a supporter of architectural styles that reflected the machine age – instead of a movement that sought to promote a single

¹²¹ Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture*, 225-226.

¹²² Ibid, 234.

¹²³ Whyte, “The Architecture of Futurism,” 371

¹²⁴ Kenneth Frampton, “Giuseppe Terragni,” 204.

¹²⁵ Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture*, 325.

¹²⁶ Poggi, “The Return of the Repressed,” 212.

¹²⁷ Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture*, 325.

architectural style.¹²⁸ Furthermore, the Rationalists did not challenge Sant'Elia's ties to the Futurists. This meant that Futurist support of Rationalist architecture did not conflict with the promotion of Futurist architectural works.

The Fascist government sought to stabilize Italy through controlling and propagandizing measures. By creating a "fascist religion," the government tapped into the desires of the younger generations of Italians while uniting the whole of Italy through myth and ritual. This omnipresent state meant there was not the option of being Fascist or not; being Fascist became part of the modern Italian identity. To reject this was to reject your country. The 1929 Lateran Pacts with the Catholic Church allowed Mussolini's government to promote its national religion with limited competition. Within the visual arts, Mussolini took an inclusive approach by inviting a wide range of artists and architects to represent Fascism. This tactic played into a larger intellectual debate on the need to develop a clear Fascist culture. While many in the artistic community believed in and advocated for a State art, Mussolini would never choose one. Such a decision would be exclusionary. All these measures by the Fascist government to involve the Italian population with Fascism were done to legitimize Mussolini's totalitarian rule over the country and to promote a "fascist religion."

¹²⁸ Ibid, 327.

Chapter Three

Sant'Elia as Fascist Martyr

The national religion of Fascism permeated Italian society. Its myths and rituals shaped public life and its constant promotion by the Fascist government caused conflict with the Vatican. Knowing this, it is to be expected that this “fascist religion” also had an effect on Futurism and other art movements during this period. With the competitive environment brought on by the “unofficial” competition for a State art of Fascist Italy, it is expected that those competing for the honor would publically align themselves with Mussolini, his Fascist government and the “fascist religion” they promoted. This chapter will connect the legacy of Antonio Sant'Elia as the figurehead of Futurist architecture to the cult functions of war heroes under the “fascist religion” of Mussolini's government. I argue that the cult of the fallen was such a widely propagated and identified myth in Fascist society during this period that the general public would have recognized the connection Marinetti was making in his praising of Sant'Elia as a war hero who died in combat and thus aligning Sant'Elia's Futurist legacy with this Fascist myth.

Sant'Elia and the Cult of the Fallen

Throughout the 1920s and '30s, Marinetti promoted Sant'Elia as the father of Fascist architecture who was a “foremost fascist” who “died gloriously on the Karst” fighting for his country.¹²⁹ By describing Sant'Elia in this way – focusing on Sant'Elia's

¹²⁹ Caramel and Longatti, *Antonio Sant'Elia*, 60; Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics*, 283.

ultimate sacrifice for his country – Marinetti was propagating the Fascist cult of the fallen. As stated in the first chapter, Sant’Elia relationship with Futurism, Socialism, and war is ambiguous. He debuted as a Futurist within days of being elected as a Socialist council member in his hometown of Como. He served in the Italian army’s only all-volunteer corps while writing letters implying he was drafted to fight. Sant’Elia’s contradictory actions and limited writings expressing his own opinions left his life open to interpretation by Marinetti. In emphasizing Sant’Elia’s death of the battlefield of World War One, Marinetti made Sant’Elia famous not only as the father of Italian modern architecture, but also a Fascist hero.¹³⁰

The cult of the fallen¹³¹ emerged as a central myth in the “fascist religion.”¹³² The cult exhibited itself through ritual celebrations honoring the men who died fighting for Italy during World War One. It emerged immediately after the end of the war and spread throughout Italy before being absorbed into Fascist mythology.¹³³ The necessary dependencies along the front lines of battle, where soldiers were counted on and had to trust each other with their lives, defined the idea of loyalty that came to be the basis for the new lay religion of Fascism.¹³⁴ Gentile argues that the cult of the fallen “best

¹³⁰ Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture*, 97.

¹³¹ As my argument relies heavily on the work of Emilio Gentile, I am using the phrase “cult of the fallen” for consistency. This is the phrase Gentile uses in his book, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, to describe the fascist cult of the war dead. Other scholars have referred to the cult of the fallen as the “cult of the martyrs,” “cult of the dead” and “cult of the fallen soldier.”

¹³² Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, 27.

¹³³ Ibid, 17-18.

¹³⁴ Gentile, “The Myth of National Regeneration,” 30.

expressed Fascism's secular religiousness and heroic conception of life," because of the spiritual connection it created between Fascist society and those who had passed.¹³⁵ It united the living and the dead through their shared "faith" in Fascism.¹³⁶ These young men who died in battle that were celebrated by the cult of the fallen became the "saints" of Fascism's national religion.

Despite being a cult that was centered on death, the cult of the fallen glorified and praised the sacrifices of those who died for the Fascist cause.¹³⁷ The cult of the fallen masked the horrors that Italy had just experienced during the war by hiding the finality of death.¹³⁸ Partaking in the cult rituals of the dead became part of the shared Fascist experience and allowed the memories of these men to live on. This shared experience made all of the deaths a collective loss and devalued the individual while exalting the sense of community under Fascism.¹³⁹ Fascist officials openly discussed the religious connotations of the cult of the fallen. In 1926, Salvatore Gatto, the soon to be deputy secretary of the Nationalist Fascist Party, did this when he compared "the heroes of the fascist revolution" to "Christian Martyrs."¹⁴⁰ As a young soldier who died on the

¹³⁵ Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, 27.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Poggi, "The Return of the Repressed," 219.

¹³⁹ Gentile, "Fascism as Political Religion," 243-44.

¹⁴⁰ Mark Antliff, "Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity," *Art Bulletin* Vol. 83, No. 1 (March 2002): 156.

battlefield of World War One fighting for his country, Sant'Elia became one of the many “fascist saints” who had sacrificed their lives for Italy.

Multiple rituals are associated with the cult of the fallen. The most prominent of these rituals was the roll call. At services for Fascists killed in action, the leaders of the squad would call out the fallen compatriot's name, while all those in attendance called out “*presente*.”¹⁴¹ By having the crowd unanimously stand in for the fallen soldier, the call of “*presente*” honored the dead by acknowledging their sacrifice for the nation. Furthermore, it illustrates the religiousness of Fascism, as this action bonded together the living and the dead in their shared faith in Fascism.¹⁴² All Fascist party buildings had a prominently placed *sacrario*, a sacred space where one could honor Fascist martyrs.¹⁴³ These sacred spaces stood as constant reminders of those who had died for the Fascist cause. Another ritual was the naming of public spaces in honor of these “fascist saints.” In November of 1922, shortly after Mussolini was installed as prime minister, a decree was sent out by the undersecretary of public instruction, Dario Lupi, announcing that every town in Italy must have an avenue or park of remembrance with trees planted in the honor of every local soldier who died in World War One.¹⁴⁴ In February of the following year, this decree was updated to require trees be planted in honor of those who died for

¹⁴¹ Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, 27.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Doordan, *Building Modern Italy*, 132.

¹⁴⁴ Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, 35.

the Fascist cause.¹⁴⁵ This ritual expanded to include the naming of public places and organizations after “fascist martyrs.” The myth of the fallen celebrated many men who died in battle.¹⁴⁶ In the case of Sant’Elia, the *Squadra d’Azione Fascista Antonio Sant’Elia*, the Fascist militia named in his honor, was in attendance at his grand reburial ceremony in 1921. In addition, multiple towns in Sant’Elia’s native Lombardy region named a street or a square after him.¹⁴⁷

1932 *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution*

I am introducing the 1932 *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution* here for two reasons: one, it has been analyzed by scholars for its having functioned as both an exhibit and a shrine for national worship, exemplifying the “sacralization of politics” theory put forth by Gentile; and two, it supports my argument that the cult of the fallen was so prevalent in Fascist society that Sant’Elia’s legacy would have been understood within this mythology at the time.¹⁴⁸ The *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution* was held at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, on via Nazionale in the center of Rome, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome. The exhibit presented a chronological history of the Fascist Revolution from 1914 to 1922. It was open everyday from morning until 11pm,

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Roberto Sarfatti, the son of Margherita Sarfatti, was another soldier who received great praise after his death on the battlefield in 1918. There is a street named after him in Milan. Mussolini praised Roberto’s bravery on the pages of *Il Popolo d’Italia*, and Roberto received two posthumous medals honoring his bravery in combat.

¹⁴⁷ da Costa Meyer, *The Work of Antonio Sant’Elia*, 191.

¹⁴⁸ Antliff, “Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity,” 157; Braun, *Mario Sironi*, 146.

including Sundays, Easter, and Christmas – days typically spent in church.¹⁴⁹ It was visited by 3,701,818 people, meaning that it average over 5,000 people a day and was seen by one in every eleven Italians.¹⁵⁰ The exhibit was so popular that its initial schedule of a six-month run was extended to two years.

The Beaux Arts-style exterior of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni was deemed inappropriate to express the subject matter of the *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution* and masked for the exhibition. The new exterior, designed by Rationalist architects Adalberto Libera and Mario De Renzi, has been called the “most spectacular and most important realization of Fascist architecture.”¹⁵¹ The exhibit exterior consisted of a central cube flanked by two rectangles (see fig. 1). The cube served as a backdrop to four stylized fasces, in front of which stood the title of the exhibition in tall, metal letters. This bold example of modern architecture in the heart of historic Rome was noted for its perfect representation of Fascism – disciplined and orderly while at the same time dynamic and revolutionary.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Schnapp, “Epic Demonstrations,” 5.

¹⁵⁰ Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “Fascism’s Museum of Motion,” *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 45, No. 2 (Feb 1992): 89.

¹⁵¹ Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture*, 407.

¹⁵² Ibid, 412-13.



Figure 1. Adalberto Libera and Mario De Renzi, exterior of the *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution*, Rome, Italy, 1932. Source: *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* catalogue.

While the exterior conveyed the power and vision of Mussolini's Fascist movement, the interior of the *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution* served as a “representative rite” of “fascist religion.”¹⁵³ The procession through the exhibit galleries united individual visitors with Mussolini and his government through their common fascist history and faith.¹⁵⁴ The exhibit was designed to bring Fascist history to life.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Braun, *Mario Sironi*, 147.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Unlike the exterior, the nineteen interior galleries had been designed by a wide range of Italian artists and architects. The Italian Studies scholar Jeffrey T. Schnapp describes the exhibition galleries as “a kaleidoscopic fusion of Rationalist architecture schemes, a Futurist-inspired aesthetic of collage and photomontage, and an emergent mythico-heroic architectural Classicism.”¹⁵⁶ The Rationalist architect Giuseppe Terragni and the *Novecento* artist Mario Sironi are the most notable of those who took part in design of the galleries, and Marinetti also served as an official advisor during the planning stages.¹⁵⁷ In a more direct interpretation of the procession through the galleries, Margherita Sarfatti in her role as an art critic described the *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution* as, “a cathedral where the walls speak,” and wrote that, “For the first time in the modern period, a fact of contemporary history is embodied in the fervent atmosphere of religious affirmation and ritual.”¹⁵⁸

The “Sacrarium of the Martyrs,” the final gallery of the *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution*, was a physical representation of the cult of the fallen and became a point of pilgrimage for Fascists around Europe (see fig. 2).¹⁵⁹ Out of the nineteen galleries on the first floor of the exhibition, the first fifteen galleries gave a chronological history of the Fascist revolution. The first four galleries quickly covered the period before, during and

¹⁵⁵ Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “Epic Demonstrations: Fascist Modernity and the 1932 Exhibitions of the Fascist Revolution,” in *Fascism, Aesthetics, and Culture*, ed. by Richard J. Goslan. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992): 7.

¹⁵⁶ Schnapp, “Fascism’s Museum of Motion,” 89.

¹⁵⁷ Braun, *Mario Sironi*, 146.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 147.

¹⁵⁹ Schnapp, “Fascism’s Museum of Motion,” 95.

immediately after World War One. The following eleven galleries focused on the “heroic” period of Fascism from 1919 to 1922, emphasizing Mussolini and his rise to power. The final four were galleries that presented historical facts, but not in chronological order. After the Hall of Honor containing Mussolini’s first office from Milan, the Gallery of Fasci displaying banners from a variety of Fascist groups, and the Mussolini room, the *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution* culminated in the “Sacrarium of the Martyrs.”¹⁶⁰ Designed by Rationalist architects Adalberto Libera and Antonio Valente, the “Sacrarium of the Martyrs” was the centerpiece of the exhibit. As visitors entered the cylindrical room a towering cross with the inscription, “*PER LA PATRIA IMMORTALE!*” (“For the Immortal Fatherland”) stood before them. The walls of the gallery flashed the phrase, “*Presente!*” which could also be heard being spoken over and over again on a recording being played within the gallery.¹⁶¹ Not only did this gallery put the visitor in the middle of the roll call, the most prominent ritual of the cult of the fallen, but it also immortalized the experience within the shared collective of Fascist society. The official guidebook to the *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution* explained to visitors that the “Sacrarium of the Martyr” was a physical expression of “that sense of warriorlike mysticism that inspired the Martyrs themselves with the transport through which they found their death.”¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 89-91.

¹⁶¹ Antliff, “Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity,” 157.

¹⁶² Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture*, 415.

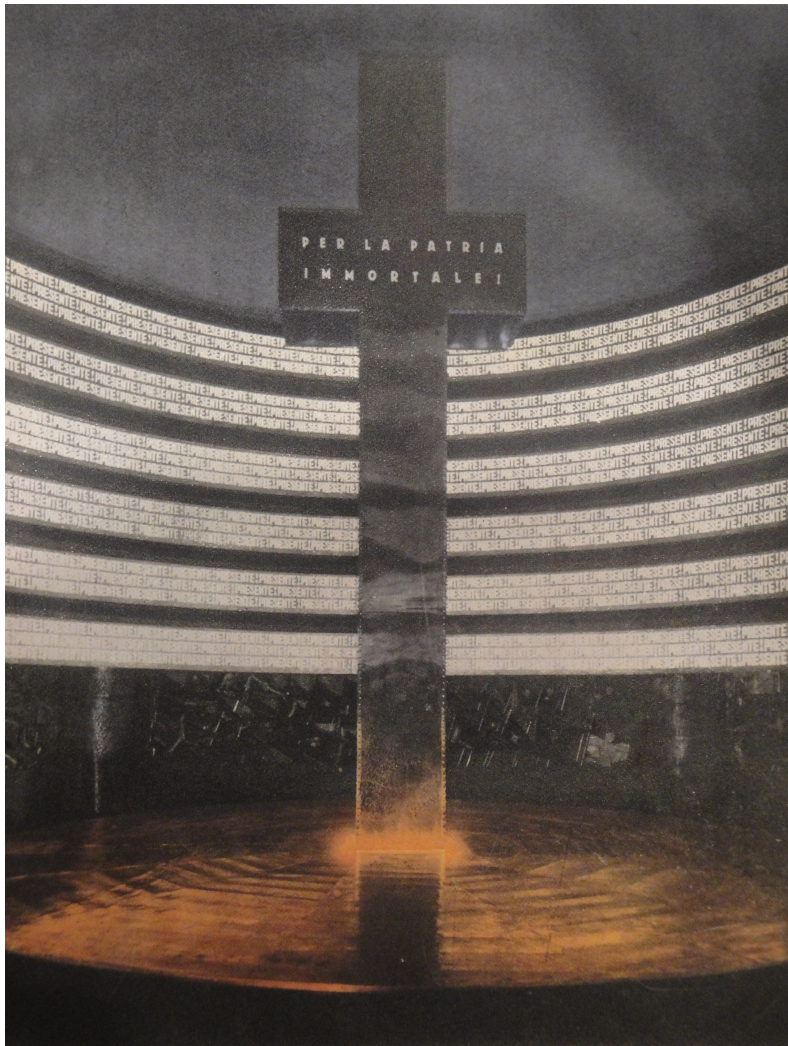


Figure 2: Adalberto Libera and Antonio Valente, “The Sacrarium of the Martyrs,” in the *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution*, 1932. Source: *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* catalogue.

Starting in 1933, Fascists from around Italy and Europe began to take pilgrimages by bicycle or foot to the “Sacrarium of the Martyrs” during the two years the *Exhibit of the Fascist Revolution* remained open.¹⁶³ These pilgrimages were even reported on in the

¹⁶³ Schnapp, “Fascism’s Museum of Motion,” 95.

local newspapers.¹⁶⁴ In discussing these pilgrims, Schnapp writes that “to take on the onerous journey is to make of oneself a ritual offering, a sacrifice, in this case not in the imitation of Christ but of the Fascist “martyrs” recollected in the exhibition’s *sacrarium*.”¹⁶⁵ This illustrates how embedded the cult of the fallen became in the lives of everyday Italians. It shows how the cult of the fallen was not only understood, but also celebrated to the fullest in Fascist society.

The Myths of *Romanità* and *Italianità*

Marinetti and the Futurists were limited in what aspects of Fascist mythology and ritual they could embrace, as not all were compatible with the ideals of Futurism. The Fascist myths of *romanità* and *italianità*, along with the cult of the fallen, were pervasive throughout Fascist Italy. However, they remained unavailable to Marinetti and the Futurists. Both of these myths celebrated Italy’s historical past, but the Futurists could not embrace Italy’s historical heritage – that was against everything that the movement had been founded on. *Novecento* and Rationalism easily connected with the Fascist mythology of *romanità* and *italianità*, both of which celebrated Italy’s past and present at the same time. *Romanità* was a celebration of “romanness,” meaning it embraced all the greatness and grandeur of Ancient Rome – with the belief that this glory existed throughout the centuries and was now reincarnated within the Fascist government.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Schnapp, “Epic Demonstrations,” 20.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Lazzaro, “Forging a Visible Fascist Nation,” 14.

Mussolini's government projected the belief that it had reawakened this grandeur, returning it not just to Rome, but to the whole of Italy. In the same vein, *italianità* celebrated the shared history and common identity of the Italian people, instead of defining "Italianness" through regional identities.¹⁶⁷ Both of these myths were complementary to the idea of a "return to order" in the visual arts, which both *Novecento* and Rationalists embraced.

Utilizing mythology and ritual, which both played significant roles in Fascist society, was a way to align oneself with the Fascist regime.¹⁶⁸ They became part of the collective memory and served as a way to understand life under Mussolini's government. The Futurist could not embrace Italy's historical heritage through the myths of *romanità* and *italianità*. This meant that Marinetti and the Futurists had to find alternative ways to connect their movement to the Fascist government.¹⁶⁹ As discussed in chapter two, the cultural politics of Mussolini's government instigated an unofficial competition for a State art of Fascist Italy. This put pressure on Marinetti to find ways to define Futurism through Fascist ideals. Even though the Futurists had a personal history with Mussolini going back to 1915, their anti-historical rhetoric left them on the sidelines of cultural debates in Italy when the "return to order" became the dominant artistic style in Italy.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Gentile, "Fascism as Political Religion," 243.

¹⁶⁹ The myths of *romanità* and *italianità* were prominently used by the Fascist government and deserve a much deeper discussion than I have allowed them here. The purpose of their brief introduction in this chapter is to show that there were limited narratives in Fascist mythology that aligned with Italian Futurism.

The legacy of Sant'Elia was one method by Marinetti to unite Futurist history with the Fascist revolution.

By emphasizing Sant'Elia's death on the battlefield, Marinetti succeeded in aligning Sant'Elia's legacy as the figurehead of Futurist architecture with the Fascist cult of the fallen. Through rituals such as partaking in the roll call, planting honor trees, or naming public spaces after the war dead, the cult of the fallen prominently exhibited itself throughout Fascist society. Its physical representation as the "Sacrarium of the Martyrs" in the 1932 *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution* became a sacred destination for Fascist pilgrims throughout Italy and Europe. Myths like the cult of the fallen, *romanità*, and *italianità* became part of the collective consciousness of the citizens of Fascist Italy. As Marinetti promoted Sant'Elia during this period through choice narratives and select images, he was also promoting the myth of the fallen, inevitably tying Sant'Elia's legacy within this cult. By doing this, he embedded Sant'Elia's narrative as a Futurist with Fascist mythology.

Conclusion

This thesis fills a gap in scholarship on Antonio Sant'Elia by analyzing how and why his posthumous legacy as the figurehead of Futurist architecture and as a Fascist war hero came to be. By identifying the cult of the fallen and its accompanied rituals, this research explains how the legacy of Sant'Elia propagated by Marinetti in the 1920s and '30s would have been understood within the context of this cult at the time. The rituals of the cult of the fallen were part of everyday life in Fascist Italy. This myth was far too prevalent not to be recognized in the legacy of Sant'Elia. As a topic, Sant'Elia's legacy had previously been discredited as "fascist propaganda," and it was not until the 1990s when scholars of Fascism began researching the cultural politics of Mussolini's regime that this became a viable research topic. This thesis does show that Marinetti aligned Sant'Elia's legacy with Fascist propaganda, but it is no longer acceptable to dismiss Sant'Elia's legacy because of its association with Fascism.

Chapter One discusses the development of the Sant'Elia's legacy within Second Futurism. The Futurists emerged from World War One broken. While Marinetti continued to stand as the figurehead of Futurism, Second Futurism survived as a widespread art movement with regional groups throughout Italy. This was a stark contrast to pre-war Futurism, which existed as a small group of artists centered around Marinetti in Milan. In the disconnected nature of Second Futurism, rhetoric became even more important. This rhetoric served a primary role in uniting Futurist members far and wide. Sant'Elia's legacy came to play an important role in Futurist rhetoric, as he

became a cult figure to whom new members of Futurism were required to pay homage. The growing rise in recognition of Sant'Elia's legacy correlates with the growing ties between Second Futurism and Italy's Fascist government.

Chapter Two analyzes how Italian society, religion, and culture functioned under Fascism. Utilizing the theory of the "sacralization of politics" put forth by Italian historian Emilio Gentile, this chapter explains how Fascism permeated the lives of Italian citizens by operating as a political religion. This "fascist religion" used myth, ritual and a shared faith in Fascism to unite the Italian public under Mussolini's rule. The 1929 Lateran Pacts limited the influence of the Catholic Church and allowed the religion of Fascism to spread further throughout Italian society. Mussolini's purposefully inclusive cultural policies encouraged the artistic factions in Italy – including the Futurists, the Rationalists, and the *Novecento* artists – to align themselves with Fascism as they competed amongst themselves to be recognized as the State art of Fascist Italy.

Chapter Three focuses on Sant'Elia as a Fascist martyr. This chapter shows that Marinetti aligned Sant'Elia's posthumous legacy with the Fascist cult of the fallen by highlighting Sant'Elia's death while fighting for Italy during World War One. The cult of the fallen and its rituals were commonplace in Fascist society. An analysis of the 1932 *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution* exemplifies the familiarity everyday Italians had with this cult. The exhibition's final gallery, the "Sacrarium of the Martyrs," was a physical representation of the cult of the fallen. Furthermore, this gallery became a point of pilgrimage for devout Fascist across Italy and Europe. This chapter illustrates that those hearing Marinetti promote Sant'Elia as the Futurist architect who died as a Fascist

soldier on the battlefields of World War One would have understood Sant'Elia's legacy within the context of the cult of the fallen.

The idea of Sant'Elia became more important than the man himself. A concern when working with his history is considering how much of our knowledge of Sant'Elia's work is in fact shaped by the posthumous legacy Marinetti created for him. It is during the Fascist era that Sant'Elia became defined by the *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture* and the illustrations from his *La Città Nuova* series. This definition remains today. Within Second Futurism, Sant'Elia's legacy functioned as a shared history for all the new members of the movement. He became the subject of praise and admiration by those who did not know him. Marinetti furthered this public admiration of Sant'Elia as the figurehead of Futurist architecture through an array of exhibitions in his honor. Marinetti turned Sant'Elia into a public figure that he could manipulate to the needs of Second Futurism.

It is interesting to consider what would have become of Sant'Elia's work if Marinetti had not promoted it. Would Sant'Elia's *La Città Nuova* series still be regarded among the most influential architectural works of the twentieth century? While any answer to that question could only be speculation, what is clear in the legacy of Sant'Elia is the control Marinetti held over the Futurist movement throughout his lifetime. After founding the movement in 1909, Marinetti remained in-charge for the rest of his life. It is only after his death on December 2, 1944, that one can say Futurism came to an end.

There is an argument to be made that Marinetti, above all, was an opportunist. Left with Sant'Elia's drawings and little else, Marinetti was able to turn Sant'Elia into a

Futurist figurehead that artists, both those associated with and not associated with Futurism, could admire. It was Sant'Elia's lack of a clear narrative that Marinetti found valuable. This is likely the reason Sant'Elia was promoted over other more established Futurists who also died during World War One, such as Umberto Boccioni. The reason Boccioni did not earn a cult status in Second Futurism could perhaps be because his narrative was not as pliable as Sant'Elia's. A fervent Futurist, Boccioni had been a member of the movement since 1910. He was not only a brilliant artist, but also a theorist. He wrote Futurist manifestos on painting, sculpture, and even architecture, though the latter was never published. Boccioni died as a soldier during World War One, but it was not during battle. While it is often said that Boccioni died from the injuries sustained by falling off of his horse during a training exercise, his actual cause of death was revealed by Margherita Sarfatti, who admitted Boccioni fell from his horse on his way to visit a woman he was courting in Verona.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, Boccioni's story was well known. His ideas about Futurist art were outlined in the manifestos he authored and seen in the many paintings and sculptures he created.

When scholars began to study Sant'Elia's work after the fall of Italy's Fascist government, they debated whether or not Sant'Elia should be considered a Futurist. This debate emerged because of Futurism's close ties with Mussolini's Fascist government. Italian scholars believed that the only way to return Sant'Elia his rightful place in the history of Italian modern architecture was to free him from the taints of Futurism. In

¹⁷⁰ Cannistraro and Sullivan, *Il Duce's Other Woman*, 145

June of 1956, Swiss architect Giovanni Bernasconi reprinted the *Messaggio*.¹⁷¹ The text had been forgotten up until this point. The *Messaggio* was the text written by Sant'Elia to accompany his *La Città Nuova* series when it was first exhibited in the 1914 New Tendencies exhibition in Milan, prior to Sant'Elia's official involvement with the Futurists. These scholars used the rediscovery of Sant'Elia's *Messaggio* as proof that he never wanted to be a Futurist.

Italian scholars argued the *Messaggio* showed that Marinetti took Sant'Elia's ideas – published before Sant'Elia's association with the Futurists and thus implicitly free from Fascism – and republished them as the *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture*. The Italian historian Bruno Zevi argued that Sant'Elia's "name was used as a jingoistic instrument to forward an absurd notion of Italian supremacy during Fascism, and nothing more."¹⁷² At the other end of the spectrum, the famed English architectural critic Reyner Banham argued that Sant'Elia was and would always be regarded as a Futurist. In a paper read before the Royal Institute of British Architects on January 8, 1957, Banham denounced the Italians attempts to categorize Sant'Elia as anything other than a Futurist, exalting him as a pioneer of new architecture.¹⁷³ Banham's attitude towards this debate is captured in the following statement,

...I think we can say that if Sant'Elia, living in Milan, the capital city of Futurism, during Futurism's most productive and tough-minded period, thought Futurist thoughts without contact with the Futurists or borrowing

¹⁷¹ da Costa Meyer, *The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia*, 149.

¹⁷² Doordan, *Building Modern Italy*, 13.

¹⁷³ Banham, "Futurism and Modern Architecture," 129.

from them, then we are faced with the most monstrous art-historical coincidence of recent centuries.¹⁷⁴

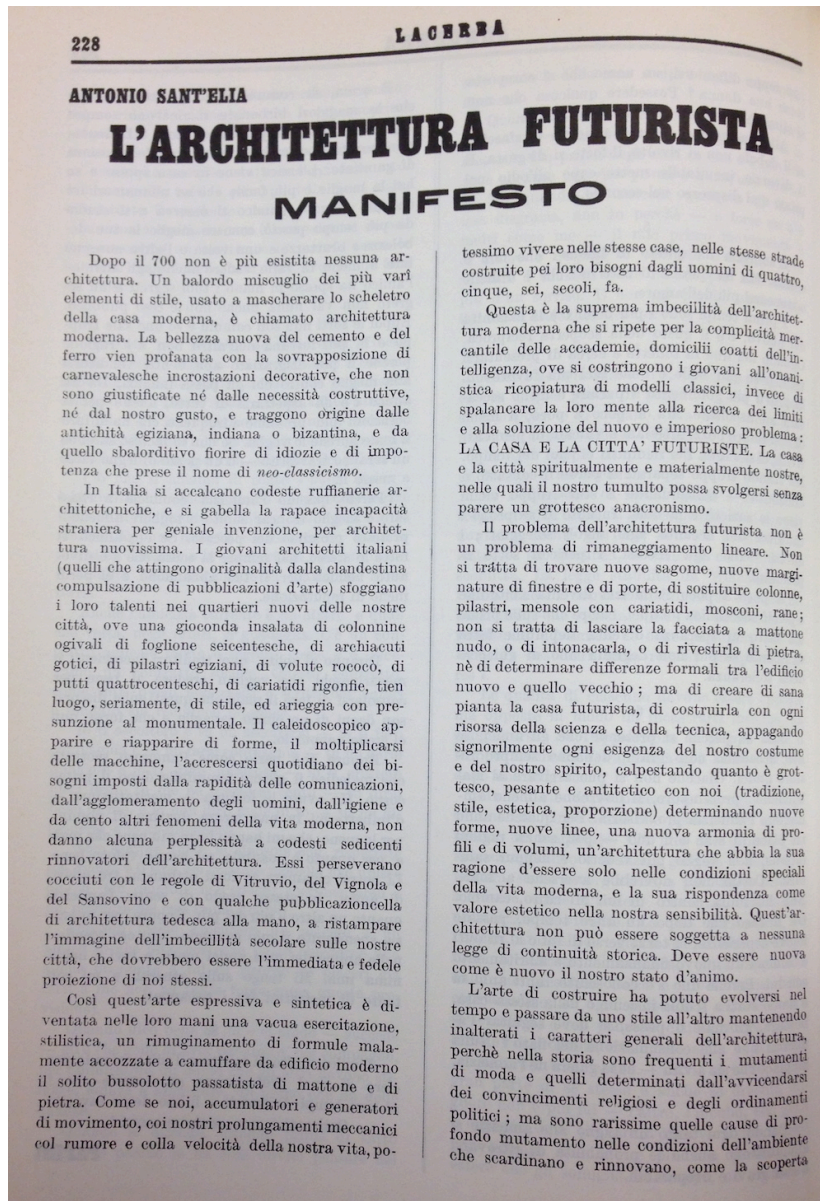
Even Banham's view, widely accepted at the time, demonstrates how Sant'Elia's identity had already grown far beyond the man himself.

This thesis explores a topic that was previously considered taboo, giving rise to the need to reconsider existing scholarship when the taboo is lifted and new theories of understandings emerge. The argument by these Italian scholars eventually fell flat, but it was still prevalent in Italian scholarship up until the 1980s, as I noted when discussing Alberto Caramel and Alberto Longatti's 1988 book on Sant'Elia in the introduction to this thesis. While there are no longer continued attempts to remove Sant'Elia from Futurist history, he has been seemingly removed from Fascist history. While Esther da Costa Meyer hinted at this gap in scholarship in her book *The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia: Retreat into the Future*, published in 1995, no scholar has yet explored this avenue of Sant'Elia's history. Just as Marinetti did in the 1920s and '30s, Sant'Elia continues to be represented today by the *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture* and his *La Città Nuova* series used to illustrate it.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 131.

APPENDIX 1

Antonio Sant'Elia, *L'architettura Futurista Manifesto* (*The Manifesto of Futurist Architecture*), 1914. Source: de Bellis Collection, San Francisco State University.



di leggi naturali, il perfezionamento dei mezzi meccanici, l'uso razionale e scientifico del materiale.

Nella vita moderna il processo di conseguente svolgimento stilistico nell'architettura si arresta. L'ARCHITETTURA SI STACCA DALLA TRADIZIONE. SI RICOMINCIA DA CAPO PER FORZA.

Il calcolo sulla resistenza dei materiali, l'uso del cemento armato e del ferro escludono l'architettura intesa nel senso classico e tradizionale. I materiali moderni da costruzione e le nostre nozioni scientifiche, non si prestano assolutamente alla disciplina degli stili storici, e sono la causa principale dell'aspetto grottesco delle costruzioni « alla moda » nelle quali si vorrebbe ottenere dalla leggerezza, dalla snellezza superba della *poutrelle* e dalla fragilità del cemento armato, la curva pesante dell'arco e l'aspetto massiccio del marmo.

La formidabile antitesi tra il mondo moderno e quello antico è determinata da tutto quello che prima non c'era. Nella nostra vita sono entrati elementi di cui gli antichi non hanno neppure sospettata la possibilità; si sono determinate contingenze materiali e si sono rilevati atteggiamenti dello spirito che si ripercuotono in mille effetti; primo fra tutti la formazione di un nuovo ideale di bellezza ancora oscuro ed embrionale, ma di cui già sente il fascino anche la folla. Abbiamo perduto il senso del monumentale, del pesante, dello statico, ed abbiamo arricchita la nostra sensibilità del GUSTO DEL LEGGERO, DELL'EFFIMERO E DEL VELOCE. Sentiamo di non essere più gli uomini delle cattedrali, dei palazzi, degli arengari; ma dei grandi alberghi, delle stazioni ferroviarie, delle strade immense, dei porti colossali, dei mercati coperti, delle gallerie luminose, dei rettifili, degli sventramenti salutarci.

Noi dobbiamo inventare e rifabbricare la città futurista simile ad un immenso cantiere tumultuante, agile, mobile, dinamico in ogni sua parte, e la casa futurista simile ad una macchina gigantesca. Gli ascensori non debbono rincantucciarsi come vermi solitari nei vani delle scale; ma le scale, divenute inutili, devono essere abolite e gli ascensori devono inerparsi, come serpenti di ferro e di vetro, lungo le facciate. La casa di cemento, di vetro, di ferro, senza pittura e senza scultura, ricca soltanto della bellezza congenita alle sue linee e ai suoi rilievi, straordinariamente *brutta* nella sua meccanica semplicità, alta e larga quanto più è necessario, e non quanto prescritto dalla legge municipale, deve sorgere

sull'orlo tumultuante: la strada, la quale non si stenderà più come un soppedaneo al livello delle portinerie, ma si sprofonderà nella terra per parecchi piani, che accoglieranno il traffico metropolitano e saranno congiunti, per i transiti necessari, da passerelle metalliche e da velocissimi *tapis roulants*.

BISOGNA ABOLIRE IL DECORATIVO.

Bisogna risolvere il problema dell'architettura futurista non più rubacchiando da fotografie della Cina, della Persia, e del Giappone, non più imbecillendo sulle regole di Vitruvio, ma a colpi di genio, e armati di una esperienza scientifica e tecnica. Tutto deve essere rivoluzionato. Bisogna sfruttare i tetti, utilizzare i sotterranei, diminuire l'importanza delle facciate, trapiantare i problemi del buon gusto dal campo della sagometta, del capitelluccio, del portoncino, in quello più ampio dei GRANDI AGGREGAMENTI DI MASSE, della VASTA DISPOSIZIONE DELLE PIANTE. Finiamola coll'architettura monumentale funebre commemorativa. Buttiamo all'aria monumenti, marciapiedi, porticati, gradinate, sprofondiamo le strade e le piazze, inalziamo il livello delle città.

Io disprezzo e combatto:

1. Tutta la pseudo-architettura di avanguardia, austriaca, ungherese e americana;
2. Tutta l'architettura classica, solenne, ieratica, scenografica, decorativa, monumentale, leggiadra e piacevole;
3. L'imbalsamazione, la ricostruzione, la riproduzione dei monumenti, e palazzi antichi;
4. Le linee perpendicolari e orizzontali, le forme cubiche e piramidali che sono statiche, gravi, opprimenti ed assolutamente fuori dalla nostra nuovissima sensibilità;
5. L'uso di materiali massicci, voluminosi, duraturi, antiquati, costosi.

E proclamo:

1. Che l'architettura futurista è l'architettura del calcolo, dell'audacia temeraria e della semplicità; l'architettura del cemento armato, del ferro, del vetro, del cartone, della fibra tessile e di tutti quei surrogati al legno, alla pietra e al mattone, che permettono di ottenere il massimo della elasticità e della leggerezza;
2. Che l'architettura futurista non è per questo un'arida combinazione di praticità e di utilità, ma rimane arte, cioè sintesi, espressione;
3. Che le linee oblique e quelle ellittiche sono dinamiche, per la loro stessa natura hanno una potenza emotiva, mille volte superiore a

quella delle perpendicolari e delle orizzontali, e che non vi può essere un'architettura dinamicamente integratrice all'infuori di essa;

4. Che la decorazione, come qualche cosa di sovrapposto all'architettura, è un assurdo, e che SOLTANTO DALL'USO E DALLA DISPOSIZIONE ORIGINALE DEL MATERIALE GREGGIO O NUDO O VIOLENTEMENTE COLORATO, DIPENDE IL VALORE DECORATIVO DELL'ARCHITETTURA FUTURISTA;

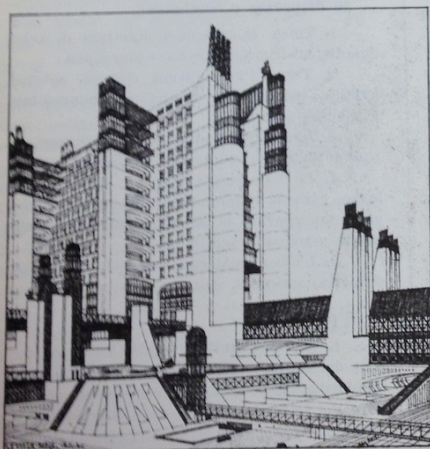
5. Che, come gli antichi trassero l'ispirazione dell'arte dagli elementi della natura, noi — materialmente e spiritualmente artificiali — dobbiamo trovare quell'ispirazione negli elementi del nuovissimo mondo meccanico che abbiamo creato, di cui l'architettura deve essere la più bella espressione, la sintesi più completa, l'integrazione artistica più efficace;

6. L'architettura come arte di disporre le forme degli edifici secondo i criteri prestabiliti è finita;

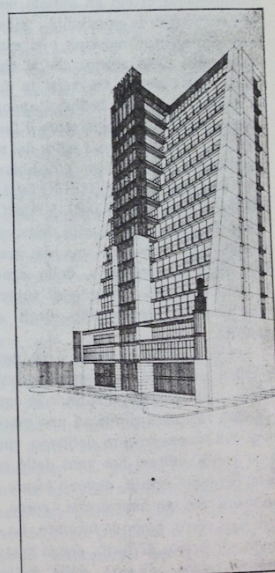
7. Per architettura si deve intendere lo sforzo di armonizzare con libertà e con grande audacia, l'ambiente con l'uomo, cioè rendere il mondo delle cose una proiezione diretta del mondo dello spirito;

8. Da un'architettura così concepita non può nascere nessuna abitudine plastica e lineare, perchè i caratteri fondamentali dell'architettura futurista saranno la caducità e la transitorietà. LE CASE DURERANNO MENO DI NOI. OGNI GENERAZIONE DOVRA' FABBRICARSI LA SUA CITTA'. Questo costante rinnovamento dell'ambiente architettonico contribuirà alla vittoria del FUTURISMO, che già si afferma con le PAROLE IN LIBERTA', IL DINAMISMO PLASTICO, LA MUSICA SENZA QUADRATURA E L'ARTE DEI RUMORI, e pel quale lottiamo senza tregua contro la vigliaccheria passatista.

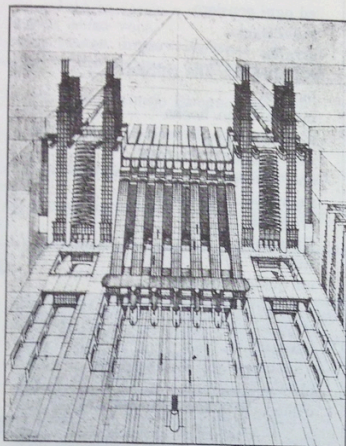
Milano, 11 luglio 1914.



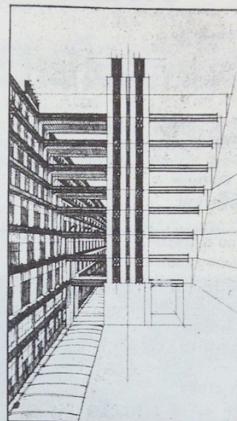
LA CITTÀ FUTURISTA. — Casamento, con ascensori esterni, galleria, passaggio coperto, su 3 piani stradali (linea tramviaria, strada per automobili, passerella metallica) fari e telegrafia senza fili.



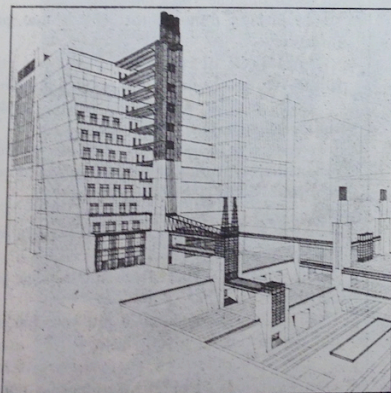
LA CITTÀ FUTURISTA. — Casa a gradinata, con ascensori esterni.



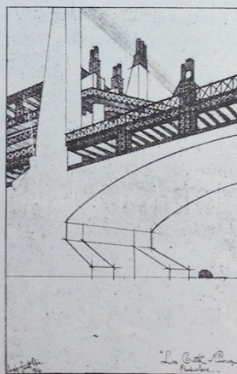
LA CITTÀ FUTURISTA. — Stazione d'aeroplani e treni ferroviari, con funicolari e ascensori, su 3 piani stradali.



LA CITTÀ FUTURISTA. — Via secondaria per pedoni, con ascensori nel mezzo.



LA CITTÀ FUTURISTA. — Casa e gradinata con ascensori dai 4 piani stradali.



LA CITTÀ FUTURISTA. — Ponte a 3 piani comunicanti per mezzo d'ascensori.

ANTONIO SANT'ELIA

Architetto

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